

Title: Rise and Shine
Text: Isaiah 60
Theme: Motivation for joy
Series: Isaiah #51
Prop Stmtnt: Our God saves now and forever!
Aim: I aim to call my people to joy based on the certainty of God's promises.

Imagine living in a country where her days of glory are in the past. You read her history and see evidences of a nation that at one time was marked by honoring God, worshiping God, loving God, understanding that the foundation of laws, morals and even freedoms comes from the Creator who has stamped his image upon people. Her youth were taught to read so that they could understand the Scriptures because her form of government would only work if there was a basic respect of God and rule of law. The world used to come to your land and marvel at your governance and wealth. You used to be a beacon of light. You were looked to with respect. Enemies sued for peace, believing that it was foolish to count you as a foe. Even your prisoners knew they would be treated with respect. The world looked up to you. But something happened. Over time, the worship of God changed from a reality to a tradition, then to a legend and finally to a myth. Other gods, other laws, other morals, and other values were embraced. Other lifestyles were tried because, after all, we wanted to be like the world. Am I describing you? Am I describing our country? Actually I am describing Judah in the days of Isaiah. The settings are eerily similar, are they not? He, like some of you, feels like a stranger in his own land. The hope that is generated from these promises, had to be of enormous encouragement and motivation for Isaiah and for the faithful remnant in his land. I pray that God will capture your heart and fire your imagination with a fresh vision of your future so that this week you live with joy knowing that the future is settled. The outcome is secure.

Read Text:

God consistently used immediate circumstances to teach eternal truths. He used Israel's slavery in Egypt to teach them about redemption and deliverance by means of the death of an innocent lamb in their place. Getting out of Egypt was important because it pointed to the greater point of how we are rescued from slavery to sin. At the time Israel was consumed with getting out of physical slavery, and most of them missed the point that God was making. Later on when Israel was threatened by the Philistines who, at the time, were led by their champion, Goliath. Israel was consumed with the problem of removing this threat. God used the pressure of that battle, and the failure of Saul to not only raise up David, but to show his people that God will rescue his people through a leader who will stand in their place, who trusts God, and who delivers them in a way that they never thought of. At the time no one knew that the ultimate Savior would come from the line of David and would stand alone between us and our condemnation and would be victorious in battle. At that time the only thing that people thought about was the fact that they had just be rescued from their enemy. When Isaiah writes this stunning, captivating and thrilling piece of poetry, his audience would naturally think of their own circumstances. But Isaiah does not give us that much historical data. In other words, we do not know exactly when all of this takes place, we just know that it does. And we know that God

tells his people that these events are going to happen in order to motivate them to have joy, to be faithful, to anticipate, and to live with hope.

When I read these chapters that promise all of these future blessings to Israel I have to ask – to whom does this apply? Is this a promise that is for national (ethnic) Israel, or is this a promise that is for spiritual Israel (remnant of faithful)? Or, perhaps this is a promise that is for the people of God (Old Testament) that is fulfilled by the people of God (NT – church). Do any of the New Testament writers refer to this passage and if so, how do they understand it? After all, since they wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit, then the way they would understand this passage would be very helpful because then we can see how God intended for it to be understood.

So, are these promises for us, for the Jews, or only for those ethnic Jews who are also followers of Christ; that is, the faithful? I believe that the nation of Israel figures prominently in God's plan for this world. I also recognize that Israel today is a lot like Israel in Isaiah's day. Most of Israel was not Israel. That is, most of Israel were not true believers. They had the history and ethnic origin, but they did not follow God from their hearts. The true believers were a faithful remnant. They were the minority. They were strangers in their own land, which strangely enough, was marked by a history of God's working. Therefore, I believe that these promises are yet to be fulfilled and will be fulfilled in some way through the nation of Israel, who, I believe will experience a major movement of the gospel at some point. I also believe that since this text is quoted in Ephesians 5 as motivation for faithful and holy living for the church, that it is also right for us to apply the principles of these promises to the NT people of God (the church). Now, when I read this, Isaiah does not emphasize WHEN this takes place, but that it WILL take place. His people would probably have assumed that after they returned from exile in Babylon that Israel would enter into a golden age, which was NOT the case. It would also have been easy to assume that when the Messiah came that Israel would be rescued from all of her enemies and become the light of the world, which was NOT the case. I am saying all of this because I do not know exactly when all of these events spoken about here will take place, or if they are describing a series of events. I have an idea of when this will happen, that makes sense to me, and if I have time I may mention it, but since that is not the emphasis of the text, I don't want that to be the emphasis of this sermon. I know this: These events have not been fulfilled yet. They are given to motivate God's people to live with joy in the midst of present difficulties and Paul uses this text for the church, so we have every right to take the principles from these promises and embrace them as great motivation for our joy because our future is secure. Therefore, we can Rise and Shine because of:

1. **God's glorious promise of glory** (1-9)

What do you think of when you read of the glory of God? (1) This is one of those situations where we have NOT been served well by religious art. How many times have you seen pictures depicting Christ as a baby with a halo? Many people assume that glory means something like a holy glow. But that is not what the word means. Instead of being something that is ephemeral, aura-like, glory really means weighty, significant and real.

So, what is exactly is God's glory? If you took all of the attributes of God and added them up – you would have his glory. So, when the Bible says that the earth will reflect the glory of God, it means that one day, the earth will reflect his goodness, his righteousness, his perfection, his beauty, his majesty, his joy, his unity, his love, his compassion, his strength, his eternality, etc. As 1 Cor. 10.31 says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" Paul is simply saying that in the most common and daily activities of life, you are to reflect God's goodness, righteousness, beauty, majesty, love, joy, unity, compassion, tenderness, etc. So, here is the point that Isaiah is making. God has promised to put his glory on display throughout the entire earth by reflecting his character in the lives of his children. Those who believe him and love him are those who will reflect him. These 9 verses are telling us that God is guaranteeing that he will put his glory on display throughout the world. This is God's glorious promise of glory. The earth and everything in it will one day reflect the character of God as it was intended to from the very beginning. That is guaranteed. Now, here is the good news.

A. God will get glory from his people. (1-3)

Arise and shine! God is commanding his children rise up and live with confidence in God and reflect his character because the light has come. This is obviously a reference to Christ. We don't have a light in ourselves. We are like the moon. We can only reflect light. But, notice this. God connects the coming of the light to the glory of the Lord (1a/b) and to your joy! (Arise and shine) I love this! God commands you to put on display, the very thing that he guarantees. He provides what he calls you to do.

- a. God is one who shines upon you. (1)
- b. God shines upon you in spite of darkness. (2)
- c. God's glory attracts the nations. (3)

So, here is what these opening three verses are saying. Live as a reflection of God because he has come to shine upon you in the midst of this dark world. And when you do, you will attract the attention of others. This is what is going to happen through the nation of Israel, someday. Someday, they (at least the faithful remnant) are going to turn to God and will reflect the glory of God in such a way that the nations of the earth will come to them in amazement! That is going to be an incredible day and because God has made this promise that it will happen, you can live with a joyful expectation, because your joy in God will not let you down.

What would this mean to Isaiah and his audience? Wow, instead of the nations coming to destroy, plunder, enslave, and exile them, one day, the nations are going to be attracted to the glory of God in them. Hold the phone now. Let's back this up just a bit. Why did the nations come to destroy, plunder, enslave and exile them? They came because Israel rebelled against God and tried to be like all the other nations. She traded the light of God's glory for the darkness of this world. She thought that being like her world would bring her glory, when in reality it brought her destruction.

B. God's glory guarantees your joy. (4-9)

Arise and shine. Rise up and live with confidence and reflect the character of God because what God promises you is better than what this world promises you.

- a. God promises the restoration of his people. (4)
- b. God promises abundance. (5)
- c. God will bless his people through other people who love him. (6-7)
- d. God's glory will be seen in your beauty. (8-9)

Because I know that I will have and experience all of these things, I do not have to try to find my joy and glory from this world. My joy is guaranteed by God's commitment to his glory. Let me give you an example of this.

Blayne Barber is trying to make the PGA tour. He has to qualify for this incredible honor, and was well on his way to doing so. If he qualifies for the tour, he could get sponsors and have a weekly shot at the big money. In the eyes of the world, that is glory. In the eyes of this world, glory is making much of you. The PGA tour would make much of you, so you should do everything you can to get on the PGA tour. During one his qualifying rounds, Blayne thought that in a practice swing, his club head may have hit a leaf. He wasn't sure, his caddy did not think so, but Blayne, just to be sure, penalized himself a stroke. At the end of the round, he signed his scorecard, stating that the score was true and turned it in. His score was good. He was on his way to qualification. After that, he found out that the penalty for what he possibly did was 2-strokes instead of 1. But, Blayne had signed the scorecard, saying that it was accurate, and now he finds out that it wasn't, or maybe wasn't, or maybe he hadn't hit the leaf in the first place. So, Blayne prayed about it and he decided that he ought to call the officials to tell them about it, knowing that the penalty for signing an inaccurate scorecard was disqualification. Here is what Blayne did. He recognized that reflecting the glory of God (putting honesty and humility on display) was more important than qualifying for the PGA. He traded the glory of man for the glory of God. But don't feel sorry for Blayne. He has joy because his joy is married to the glory of God, not to the PGA. He may or may not make the PGA. I hope he does. But since God is committed to and guarantees his own glory, Blayne's joy is safe when he chooses to do that which puts God on display.

2. God's amazing promise of reward. (10-16)

What is God saying here? He is going on record and saying that he will not forget his own and he will not forget how they are treated. What this means to Israel is that:

A. You will be rebuilt and replenished. (10-11, 13)

The picture is powerful. Instead of foreign armies coming and surrounding the city of Jerusalem and laying siege to them and tearing down their walls in order to destroy them, God says that the foreigners will come and will build up your walls. Kings, from other nations will lead processions that will come and bring you their wealth. But why? The

nations of the earth are attracted to the light of God that is being reflected in the lives of his people! It is not because of them but because God is reflecting himself through them.

B. You will be vindicated. (12, 14, 15)

These verses cause me to think that these are literal promises that are going to be literally fulfilled in a rebuilt Jerusalem that will, one day, be the focal point of the earth. As I look at verses 12, 14 and 15, it is clear that these promises are a double-edged sword. Those who despise the Jews will be crushed. The Jews, as the people of God will be vindicated. But, I think that we have to be careful in how we understand this and present it. God is not saying that all Jews will be vindicated, but only those who believe in him. Notice verse 16.

C. Your reward reveals God's grace. (16)

Not only will Israel receive the bounty from other nations, but Israel will know God as Savior, Redeemer, and the Mighty One. This means that there is coming a day when they will believe God for who he is and because of that, God will be reflected in their lives, which in turn will magnetize the nations. The same nation that rejected their own God and Messiah will one day turn to him.

Now, here is how I think it will play out, at least in a general sense. We are witnessing right now, how the world appears to be distancing itself from Israel and leaving her in isolation to face her enemies alone. It is as if the world rulers are beginning to blame Israel for all of the unrest in the Middle East and instead of siding with her, there is a trend to sympathize with, and eventually side with her enemies. Back in Isaiah's day, Israel (Judah) rejected God and God raised up other nations to punish her. But, the very nations that God raised up to punish her, God turned around and punished because they took it way too far. I believe that what happened 2700 years ago with Babylon, and about 1950 years ago with Rome is going to be repeated. Israel, which does not recognize Jesus Christ as God, is in a state of rebellion. I believe that other nations are going to rise up against her and try to wipe her out. I believe that based on Zechariah's prophecy (12), that they will appear to be successful and will be on the verge of destroying Israel, when Christ returns and (v.9) goes after every nation that comes against Jerusalem. Which, by the way, is why it is never good to bet against Israel. Zechariah 12.10 says that God "*will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*" I believe that this pouring out of God's spirit is God regenerating the Jews. They are being born again. They are getting spiritual vision. They can now see that Christ is really is the Messiah and instead of hating him, they now mourn over what they have done for him. Their hearts are changed. God's Word was right all along. They were rejecting the very one who could rescue them.

Now, hold that thought. What are the nations doing? They are attacking the people from whom the Messiah came. And just as Israel will have a change of heart about Christ, I

believe that the nations are going to have a change of heart about Israel and, obviously about Israel's Christ. Israel's Christ is our Christ. Israel's only hope is Christ. The world's only hope is Christ. And the rest of this chapter speaks of the great exchange that will take place when God gives to Israel what he has longed to give her and would have given her, except that she was in rebellion to him.

But, before we finish this out, what about the church? Where are we, the NT people of God in all of this? When you look at the Bible as the story of God redeeming a people for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, you realize that in the OT, God's focus of redemption was on Israel, who ended up rejecting him. That in turn was the occasion for God to kick open the doors for the rest of us. They were His first. We stand on the shoulders of Israel. We pray for the salvation of the Jews. We know that the gospel is for the salvation of the Jews first and also the Gentiles. God loves the Jews and Christ came as a Jew and since we love God, we love what and whom God loves. But, we also know that being a Jew does not save you from your sin. Every Jew, like every person needs to come to Christ and trust Him as the One who died in their place to pay the penalty for their sin. Ever since the 1st century AD the gospel has been advancing more among the Gentiles. But, the day is coming when the Jews will (16) "know that I, and the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob." One day they will get it. And when they get it, we, who were brought into the party back in the 1st century will kick open the doors and welcome them home. And together, forever, we will be the people of God, from every tribe, language and nation. And that is why these gifts that God gives Israel, are shared by Jew and Gentile alike.

3. **God's astounding promise of exchange.** (17-22)

Here is the picture. God promises to take that which is inferior and replace it with that which is superior. He will take our common stuff and gives us treasures. He will take our abuse and give us peace. He will remove the darkness and give us light. Now we are pilgrims, in search of a city, then we will be citizens, at home forever. Now, we are vulnerable, insignificant and irrelevant. Then, we will be next to the King – forever.

- A. **Treasures for common stuff** (17a)
- B. **Peace for abuse** (17b-18)
- C. **Light for darkness** (19-20)
- D. **Permanence for wandering** (21)
- E. **Strength for insignificance** (22)

The language of these verses (19-20) is repeated in the end of the book of Revelation. This is the certain outcome for the people of God. This is what is already yours. This is your inheritance that waits for you and cannot be taken from you. This is what we will experience forever and ever. And here what is so remarkable. Unlike our vacations, and retirements, which are rarely what the brochure looks like, this will be infinitely better than the brochure or commercial.

Beloved, rise and shine. Realize that you are called to day to reflect God's glory. Reflect the very character of God in your world. Look at the attributes of God. He is righteous, loving, merciful, gracious, kind, generous, true, and faithful. Now, look to Christ. Lean on Christ. Rely upon him who is all of these. And by relying upon his grace to strengthen you, reflect these attributes this week.

Consider an eternal promise of God. Realize that the promise is confirmed to you through Christ. Compare the weight of this promise to your temporary circumstance. Enjoy grace!