

Title: A Song of Peace (pt.2)
Text: Isaiah 26.20-27.13
Theme: God's mercy
Series: Isaiah #26
Prop Stmt: We can live in peace because of the guarantee of eternal peace.
Aim

Murakami Keiko was an 8-year old girl who lived in Hiroshima when the bomb was dropped. Her home was 1 mile from ground zero, and the only thing that saved her life was the fact that her father recognized that the sound of the plane overhead was not the familiar sound of a Japanese engine. He ordered his family into their bomb shelter that she jumped into a second before her world caved down upon her.

As I read Isaiah I hear the voice of a father crying to his family and calling to his nation to run to the shelter. He knows that destruction is coming. He knows that there is only one place where it is safe – and that is in God. Only God can save you from God. Isaiah warned and wrote these messages and preached these sermons as the prophet of God some 700 years before the birth of Christ. His warnings proved to be true. But some of his warnings not only warn of the disaster that was coming to Judah, but he spoke of his warnings were a prophecy of the disaster that was yet to fall upon our world. Every day, we get closer to the end. Every day we are closer to the day when all of the kingdoms of this world will collapse and fall. But when they fall down, then our King comes down.

Read Text:

This text is a song. Singing is a powerful gift that God uses to minister grace to us in times of distress. Isaiah 26-27 is, for the most part a song that the faithful people of God sang. It was a statement of confidence in the midst of the storm. If I could paint a picture of this text I would depict a mother nestling her child to her while huddled up in a bomb-shelter during an air raid, who with no fear is softly singing lullabies of assurance as her child sleeps. Isaiah wrote this song in anticipation of the total collapse of life as they knew it. He wanted his people to know that God is their only refuge. The reason for the collapse was because the nation as a whole had rejected God. Therefore, their world was going to crumble. So, before it was too late, he not only warned them of the danger of rejecting God, but here he spells out the beautiful rest and glorious refuge of God. Only the glorious mercy of God can save you from the righteous wrath of God. Only God can save you from God.

This song has four verses. We looked at the first one last week (26.1-6) which reminds us about the deliverance that God provides for those who humble themselves and trust him. It also speaks about the destruction that awaits the proud. We also looked at the second verse (26.7-19) which boldly declares the faithfulness of God in spite of our weakness and frailty. This morning we are going to look at the last two verses of chapter 26 and all of 27. Now, before we work through this text, there are two things that I want you to understand about God because they will help you understand this text. We are going to see again, that even though God is absolutely righteous and does respond to sin, God

loves to be merciful. That is #1. (Say that with me – “God loves to be merciful.”) God loves to put his mercy on display. Here is what I see throughout the Bible. Before God judges, he warns and warns and warns and warns. If there is no response to his warnings, then he responds with judgment, but even when he judges, he grieves over it. On the other hand, God does not wait to be merciful. He is fully prepared to be merciful. He looks for opportunities to be merciful. He loves to be merciful. Do you know what a hair trigger is? A hair trigger refers to something so, that with the slightest touch of even a hair, it goes off. God’s mercy is on a hair trigger. If you bump God, his mercy goes off – and it is glorious. His wrath however, is on a very long fuse. God sent the prophets in order to let us know that the fuse is lit. It is burning, but you can stop it. You can avoid it. You can get out of the way. You can repent. But do not be deceived. The length of the fuse should not lull you into a false assurance. Especially given the fact that it has been lit for a long time. Be careful. The longer the fuse burns and the more you ignore the warnings, the harder your heart will become. But, the conclusion is that even in wrath, God remembers mercy. Later on, Isaiah points to the reason why God can be so incredibly merciful to sinners like us. Even later on, we come to the New Testament that tells us that God sent his own Son into this world to live in our place and die in our place in such a way that Christ absorbed upon himself all of the wrath against our sin. Christ paid for the sin and secured the salvation in full of every single person who would ever trust him. Since Christ took our wrath, God is free to pour out mercy.

Here is #2. God governs over all things and uses all things to carry out multiple purposes all at the same time. For example, the nation of Edom was in total rebellion to God. They had exhausted all overtures from God. They were unbelievers. On the other hand, Judah had people in it who were believers, but in many cases, were not living as they should, or were surrounded by such idolatry that God had to respond to it. God was brining in the heat. God raised up Assyria in order to accomplish two things at the same time; punishment on the unbelieving and chastening on the believing. Those who were the recipients of his wrath, were afflicted and destroyed, and those who were recipients of his correction, were also afflicted and preserved. Same God, same circumstances; different people, different responses and outcomes.

Last Sunday night in our Romans study we parked on 5.10 and realized that if that is how God treated us when we were his enemies, how do you think he treats us now that we are his kids? That means that everything that comes into my life is not for my punishment but for his glory in my/our sanctification! If you are not a follower of Christ, you do not have that assurance, at all. Bottom line: God will respond in wrath. Make no mistake about that. But, God loves, God loves to show mercy!!

1. (3) **Wait for your Rescue.** (26.20-27.1)

The third part of this song comes in response to the promise of the resurrection and the life of joy that awaits those who trust God. Last week, I called this, our safety net that frees us to live bold because in the end, there are no ultimate risks for the follower of Christ. But, Isaiah is painfully aware, that although we have this great promise, and the outcome is guaranteed, we are not there – yet. Right now, we live in a sin-cursed world.

The people in Judah, who were faithful to God, were a minority. They were going to experience enormous upheaval because God was bringing judgment to their nation for all of the rebellion that was taking place. What are these faithful ones to do?

We resonate with that. We love our country. Some of you have fought to defend her. But, you (and all of us, for that matter) sit here with a very torn heart. While you fought to defend her liberties, you did not fight so that this country would declare its independence from God. We love our country, but we grieve her immorality, her violence, her poverty of ethics, her lying and materialism. We want to sing, “God bless America” but as we look at God’s Word, we realize that God cannot bless her and be faithful to his promises to judge sin. What is more important? God blessing America, or God fulfilling his Word? It is a hard place to come to, when we bend our knee before the throne of God recognizing that he must judge the world and along with that, he must judge our country. We ask God for mercy, but also know that if her demise will bring repentance, then we must treasure the repentance of people more than comfort. In view of that, how should we think? You know the outcome is secure. So, what do you do? That is what these 3 verses speak to. We live in anticipation of God’s rescue. He will not forget his own, even in the midst of the upheaval. Therefore...

A. **Hide in God.** (20)

Here is an invitation from God to those who truly trust him, (“my people”) to come rest in him, and rely upon him. The storm is coming, but it will only be for “a little while.” The storm is coming and it is real, but the storm will end. He ordains it. He designs it. He uses it. He controls it. But what does it mean to hide in God? It simply means, to lay hold upon his promises and simply don’t let go. You will not be disappointed because...

B. **God is getting up.** (21)

When evil is not immediately punished, people assume that they can sin and get away with it. No one can sin and get away with it. The time between the sin and the response of God is two-fold. 1) The delay gives people time to repent. If they refuse, the delay, 2) only draws back the bowstring of judgment even greater. That’s the point of this verse. God is getting up and will expose everything that people think has been hidden.

Recently Syria has been in the news for all of the killings that the Syrian government is committing against its own people. Imagine that your brother was executed by the police force in that country as a show of force. He had done nothing to deserve it, but the government wanted to impose fear into the people to maintain control over them and your brother was simply a prop to them. What can you appeal to? What means of justice can you turn to so that this atrocity is addressed? Who is going to admit to doing this? Where is the evidence of the murder? Who is going to testify? How would you not go absolutely insane? Only if you know this.

The earth, because it was made by God, will one day reveal the blood that was shed on it. That which was covered up will be exposed. The famous crimes like JonBenet Ramsey,

and the thousands of unnamed in Syria, in Russia, in Germany, in Cambodia, in Sudan, in Nigeria, in Rwanda, in South Africa, and in the thousands of abortion clinics across our land will one day testify in the court of God, as to who did what. In that day, those who had no pity upon those they killed and who never repented will themselves be shown no mercy. God is getting up, beloved. Hide in him and fear not.

C. **God will finish the job.** (27.1)

I think that 27.1 should have been the last verse in chapter 26, so that the song would have started and ended with the same opening line. The same pattern is seen in 27.2 and 27.12, which is why I think that these two chapters are part of the same song. But, this verse is one of the greatest promises in the entire Bible.

How many of you have seen those Allstate car insurance commercials featuring a guy who calls himself, “Mayhem”? This guy represents all of the “bad things” that can happen to you when you drive. As funny as these commercials, are on the surface, they are painful reminders that things happen in life that appear to be totally out of control. This is not a new problem. People in ancient civilizations tried to figure out what was behind mayhem. Some of the civilizations had this idea that there was an enormous sea monster that was responsible for stirring things up and creating chaos. They did not see chaos and mayhem as simply blind chance, but believed that there was some being (creature) who was behind it all. (Keep in mind that pagan idols were thought to have a hair-trigger temper. One of the themes of this book is God vs. the idols. The idols promise things they cannot deliver, and when you follow your idols, they will always betray you. So, here is the irony. The people were bowing down to mayhem in an effort to be saved from mayhem!) The only hope for people was if someone could do something about the sea monster. It is amazing to me to see how similar the stories of so many civilizations reflect aspects of the real story. In this case, there really is a monster behind the mayhem and chaos. And what this verse is saying, is that this monster, Satan, is not only on a leash, but God is going to deal with him and one day banish him from ever setting foot on this earth again. God will slay that serpent. I believe that the Leviathan here in Isaiah is similar to the reference to the dragon (Satan) in Revelation 12 and the serpent in Revelation 20. The sword that is used to destroy the monster in Isaiah is none other than the Word of God.

The power of a horror movie is to leave the viewer fearing that the villain could return. But, here is why we can wait to be rescued; we know that when God performs a rescue, he loves nothing to chance. He will rid this world of the monster, and he will never, ever return. So, in view of the fact that God will rescue his own and leave nothing to chance, do not fear the storms. Do not fear the mayhem and the chaos. Though Satan should buffet and trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that God hath regarded your helpless estate and shed his own blood for your soul.

2. (4) **Rest in his care.** (27.2-13)

Here again is evidence that God's wrath will never be greater than his care. Even his wrath against Judah's sin was driven by his love for them to trust him and follow him. God cares for his own and God will go to great lengths to cause us to trust him. If the wounds of a friend are faithful, how much more faithful and mercy-driven are the "wounds" of God? Now, go back to Isaiah 5. Remember this song about the vineyard that God sang? He was talking about how his own people rejected him in spite of how gracious he had been and how he had to respond to their rebellion. That song sets us up for this song. Although God has to respond to the rebellion of his people by afflicting them, his desire, his plan, his purpose and his will is to bring them to this point where he is taking care of them in a way that demonstrates how careful God is to tend to our every need. The people of Judah were facing a gauntlet. They were facing decades of trials, of war, of mayhem and chaos. Many of them would suffer immensely during this time and many would die. The temptation would be to think that God had abandoned them, when the opposite was the case. The nation, for the most part had abandoned God, and God was going to chasten them in order to bring them back. Some of them would. And one day, his people would be part of this vineyard who would be tended to by God himself.

Most of us do not relate too well with a vineyard, but we do with a house. Think of it like this. God has this house, that he loves to take care of, not in order to flip it and make a profit, but because he want to live in it and enjoy it. He loves to improve the house and expand the house. He dares the plumbing to break or the wiring to fail, so that he can use that project as an opportunity to make the house even greater. He has in mind a house that is so magnificent and complete that it will have everything in it that you could ever imagine. Knowing that he is working on that project and that he will accomplish that project gives you a little more patience to the dust and inconvenience of the process. The tearing up and repairing is for now; the house in all of her glory is forever. We are the house.

A. **Behind the clouds is the sun.** (2-6)

This is what God is going re-create. One day his people will fill the earth in such a way that will reflect his glory. Isaiah's point is clear. Be faithful now because that day is certain. Be faithful now, in spite of the coming judgments. Even if you die, you will rise again. God's plan for you and this earth is beyond glorious, and every resolve of faithfulness will be worth it a thousand times over. You will never, ever, ever regret being faithful.

B. **God's purposes will be accomplished.** (7-11)

The point of these verses is simply this. Look at history and look at what has happened to the nations. V.7 sets it up. Assyria was overrun by the Babylonians and Judah was overrun by the Babylonians. In the end, Assyria was destroyed and Judah survived. In fact, in the end, Babylon was destroyed and Judah survived. The Medes and Persians were destroyed and Judah survived. The Grecian empire, the Ptolemaic and Seleucid

dynasties, even the Roman empire, the German empire, the British empire, have all had their moments of glory and have been humbled, most of them completely gone. And yet, Judah remains.

- a. Cleansing for his people
- b. Judgment for those who rebel

God ordains events in this world for his people. And...

C. **God's people will be restored.** (12-13)

The "in that day" of v.12 wraps up the final part of this song. This speaks of the day when the people of God will enjoy abundance. They will be restored, revived, renewed and at home. This song ends the way the story will go on forever. One day we will be with the Lord, forever and ever, enjoying Him and each other to his great glory and to our great delight.

Conclusion

"We are prone to have 'hard thoughts' of God that tend to keep us from turning to him." Here is what I want to fasten with a spiritual rivet gun to your heart this morning. Look at our God! Look at the fact that his mercy is on a hair trigger. Look at the ocean of mercy that waits behind the dam of your unbelieving and un-accepting pride. Some of you are so arrogant that you think that you do not need his mercy, and some of you are so arrogant (false humility) that you refuse to believe that he is that merciful and that he waits to be merciful to you. Bend the knee of your heart – right now. Confess your unbelief, your bitterness of soul. Acknowledge your complete need of him and see the dam breaking and the ocean of God's mercy now drenching your soul!

Look at your life. Dad's, is your mercy to your children on a hair trigger? Mom's, does your family tip toe around you because they are afraid that one wrong move will set you off? Do the people that you work with see the fingerprints of a merciful God, or does your demanding nature reflect the anger of a pagan idol? Beloved, if you have truly received mercy, then you will indeed be merciful.