

Isaiah 54 1-10 (NKJV)

1 "Sing, O barren, You *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You *who* have not labored with child! For more *are* the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman," says the LORD.

2 "Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes.

3 For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.

4 "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth, And will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.

5 For your Maker *is* your husband, The LORD of hosts *is* His name; And your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

6 For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God.

7 "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.

8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer.

9 "For this *is* like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.

10 For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

Do you have joy?

Better yet, would those around you describe you as someone having joy?

First let's define it.

Joy is "The happy state that results from knowing and serving God."

Holman Bible Dictionary.

Joy is found over 150 times in the Bible. If such words as "joyous" and "joyful" are included, the number comes to over 200. The verb *rejoice* appears well over 200 times.

Holman Bible Dictionary.

Here is a good spot for some homework. Get with someone who knows you well and ask them, do you think of me as a joyful person? Do you think of me as someone who sees him or herself as being in a happy state from knowing and serving God. This is different than **happiness** in that it is not simply a feeling based on good circumstances. And it is different than **pleasure** in that it is not self focused. Joy is the **state of being** that results from our confidence in our relationship to God and our obedient response due to His love for us. Do you have joy?

As much as I do not care for the excesses caused by some charismatic doctrine, I sometimes wish we had some of those folks with us. One of their strengths is that they are not embarrassed to express themselves before God. The Baptist version of saying "amen" is a little tame in comparison to their expressions. But we see in the Bible that, when people were blessed by God, they often yelled and danced and sang. This is actually a normal reaction to the movement of God. I like silent reverence. Or at least something that looks like silent reverence. It is easy to deal with. It never needs reigned in. But the Bible seems to say that the work of God often produces **anything but** silence. Our passage this morning paints the picture of the result that the **work of the wonderful servant** in Isaiah 53 should have in **our** hearts. This is the result that it should have in **every believer**. And it isn't tame. In fact, it is a call to be rather boisterous. It may even look unruly.

As usual, I really like what brother Ortland has to say. In fact, if you could hire him to pastor here, I would highly recommend it. He says this:

When Jesus entered Jerusalem to the loud praises of his followers, the Pharisees didn't like it one bit. But Jesus said, "If these were silent, the very stones would cry out" ([Luke 19:40](#)). Enthusiasm offends religious people, because breaking forth into singing and crying aloud entails loss of control. It brings us down to the level of children, even the vulgar who never learned their manners. So be it. "If there when Grace dances, I should dance."

As we savor the good news of the sin-bearing servant of the Lord ([52:13-53:12](#)), the mountains of frost and ice within begin to thaw, and we learn to enthuse. The gospel of a surprising salvation can only make us laugh, sing, and cheer. John Calvin understood this. His theology teaches us: The Church is the place where the Gospel is preached; Gospel is good news; good news makes people happy; happy people sing. But then, too, unhappy people may sing to cheer themselves up.

Every church should put a notice on its front door: "All face-saving moralists, take warning! Within these doors your chilly pride is in

danger of melting into exuberant joy. Enter at your own risk. But all sinners depressed with guilt are welcome." Christianity throbs with holy joy for bad people. God made it that way.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

This is a good preparation for us this morning as we enter our text.

¹ "Sing, O barren, You *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You *who* have not labored with child! For more *are* the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman," says the LORD.

What we will see in our whole text is God's wife who has been unfaithful. She has run after other men. And we see God's plan of bringing her back. His plan of bringing **her** back, as well as to **bring others** to Himself, is through the **suffering servant** we learned about in Isa 53. The singing is a result of the suffering servant.

Now a barren woman in this culture would have been in a very insecure state. If something happens to her husband, she is out of luck. She will not receive any inheritance. And she has nothing to bring her status. It was a woman's great pride to provide her husband offspring. A barren woman appeared to be cursed. One could easily imagine bad things happening that would unravel your life. Do you ever worry about what might happen to you in the future? This woman probably has more reason for concern than you do.

Now what is she told to do? Sing. She is to break forth in song the way **we** want to when something wonderful happens to us. Has God suddenly required this woman to pretend that bad things are good things? No. That isn't it at all. Here is a woman that humanly speaking has nothing to be happy about.

In a larger sense, this is a nation. Has Israel brought God's salvation to the world as they were called to do? No. They failed God at every turn. They were, in a sense, barren. They did not produce the offspring that they should have. They are in bondage. Instead of representing the answer, they represent the problem. They are the barren woman in a bad spot. They have nothing to be proud of. They have nothing of themselves to trust in. They have reason to be bummed out. And what does God do?

He changes the focus. He takes the focus away from **what the people can do for themselves** and **what others can do to them** and He pours all the focus on **what the suffering servant will do for them**. The focus is changed to the Messiah. That is why He can say this:

"Sing, O barren, You *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You *who* have not labored with child! For more *are* the

children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman," says the LORD.

Do you see what this is? It is nothing but grace. It is backwards thinking. It is viewing life from an other-worldly perspective. It is putting one's trust fully in the **impossible promises** of God and ignoring the fleshly prophet that is shouting in our ear. Who is most blessed? The barren woman. Why? The story is not yet over. God is not done yet.

Aren't there times in our lives that we have wondered, how is this mess I have made going to end well? How can God build anything useful from the sins I have committed and the wrong focus I have lived? And then God does what God does and we find ourselves in green pastures, blessed in ways we could have never predicted and we know we will never deserve. And it is **His** doing. It is all **His** doing. This is the doing of the Suffering Servant.

In our text we see that the Suffering Servant is going to make Israel the most fruitful woman anyone could imagine. There are going to be un-numberable branches grafted into this tree. And it will not be because the **Jewish people** did so well. It will be because the **Jewish Messiah** does so perfectly.

Isn't God's grace a reason to shout and cheer? How can we be so focused on our barrenness when God has given us so many children? There are lots of applications of this. This **HAS** to rule our thinking. God's redirections have to be the source of our thought food. If we are miserable, it is because we are focused on our **own inability to provide** or **the exaggerated abilities of others** to do us harm. If we will focus on the face of the Messiah, if we will allow **Him** to refocus our attention on what **He** is doing, if we will look at what **HE** says are the plans for our lives, if we will believe what **His** endgame is for us, we will never find a reason to be despondent. What we find in the face of Jesus is a reason to break into **loud and boisterous song**. And it is not because of what **we** can do. And it is not because of what **others** can do. And it is not because of what **life situations** might happen. It is because of **what the Messiah has done** and what **the Messiah will do for us**.

So what should we do in expectation?

² "Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes.

³ For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.

Look at this. What would be the most insane thing in the world for a barren woman to do? Build on to her house to prepare for the upcoming throng of children. And what does God tell this woman to do? Begin your building

project. Begin your tent expansion project. Get ready for the influx that the Lord will bring. Do you see this picture of faith? Isn't that how we are called to live? Sometimes we are to prepare for and expect His miraculous work. We have begun a discipleship training program. And while this booklet we are using may be actually helping **some of us** to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ, it is primarily designed to **get us ready** to expand our tents. Every single one of us who believe in Christ are called to make disciples. And I believe the more seriously we commit ourselves to doing the will of God, the more likely it will be that He will make it happen. What we are doing is our version of stretching the tents. We are getting ready for the people **God will bring** to us. We as elders think this is the most faithful thing we can do. Now let's just watch to see what God does. In our text God is talking to the nation of Israel. And they are to get ready for the influx of the Gentiles into their fold. They aren't real wild about that idea. But that is what God is calling them to do.

4 "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth, And will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.

5 For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

6 For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God.

7 "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.

8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer.

The illustration here is a mix of things. Israel is portrayed as a wayward wife many times in the prophetic scriptures. As such, she **deserves** wrath and abandonment and shame. She is by no means an innocent victim, being randomly picked on by God. She made choices that proved her unworthiness to be the bride of Christ. She was ashamed. She was disgraced and she disgraced herself. She was even widowed in some way. God died to her. She was forsaken. She felt the grief of the loss of her relationship with God. God hid His face from this once bride of His due to her unfaithfulness.

Now, what did she rightfully **have coming**? It would have been perfectly ok if God would have said, I will never again have anything to do with you. After all, that is what he even allows humans to do in this circumstance. Divorce is

allowed when a human violates the bounds of marriage in order to be physically intimate with another person. And we see such language in scripture, where God **hates** divorce but He has chosen at one time to **be** divorced.

This is all one side of this text. It all displays what the woman deserved. And in fact, it is what we all deserve. So if we want to fight for our rights with God, good luck. We have none. We have abandoned all of our rights. We have all like sheep gone astray. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have all been a disappointment to God. We have all been a jerk toward God. We have acted like spoiled rebellious kids. That is us. The woman in the text has no complaint. But praise God that is not the end of the story. Look at the character of God that comes out in this text.

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5 For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

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He says- don't fear. Even though God had the right to **make her fear** and she **deserved fear**. Christ said don't fear. Why? Because God loves her and has a wonderful plan for her life. That line is not a good evangelism line, but it is absolutely true of anyone who is God's child. He does love us who He has chosen and has a wonderful plan for our lives. He says, you will forget the shame of your youth. It won't always be in the forefront. It won't always be the most obvious thing about you. It will not be how you are known.

Isn't it wonderful how God works in our lives? Isn't it wonderful that we can get past the days of shame and disgrace? His plan is to take us to greener pastures. The shame and disgrace we put upon ourselves is only to prepare us for better things.

Now why is all this going to happen? Vs 5- It is not because of who **you** are. It is not because of your precious Jewish bloodline. It is because of who **your Maker** is. It is because of who **your Husband** is.

Have you ever heard of a man marrying a woman with a checkered past and the expression is used, He made an honest woman out of her? That is what God is doing here. He is making an honest woman out of us. We were harlots and He made us brides. He is giving us the **legitimacy of relationship** when we deserved to be an outcast. He is treating us as if we have value when we have already proven that we do not. Everything we have that is of value He **has assigned to us** by His **relationship** with us. That is the picture. And that will always be the picture when God saves a human being.

I love this verse- "**For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.**

And then the parallel verse saying the same thing a different way-

With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer.

You and I have a problem with time. The problem we have is that we tend to only remember **the mere moment** and we **forget eternity**. Do you know what I mean? God promises that He will gather us with Him **for eternity** where He has gone through the painstaking process of preparing a place specifically designed for us. Let me ask this. Has that truth ever got you in funk? Have you ever been bummed out thinking about eternity? Have you ever created your own world of misery by focusing on the world to come where all will be wonderful? Do you ever whine about having to be in eternity with Jesus forever and with His people in a sinless state? Has that ever made you distant and hard to live with? Has that ever made you lash out at those around you? Has that ever caused you to abandon your responsibilities? No. I didn't think so.

It is that **mere moment** that we fixate on. It is the **mere moment** when God allows our faith to be tested. It is the **mere moment**, the flash in the pan, when we are required to trust God and God is our only resource, and we really don't like it that way because we don't like trusting only in God. We would rather fix things right now to make it easier for us. We would rather have a **sight** picture that looks good than to have a **sight** picture that looks bad and a promise from God that says we must **trust Him** for the good.

God pulls our awareness of Him for a mere season in our lives, a mere twinkling of an eye in the span of all human history. We are told "no" to something we really feel like we must have. We are denied something that we had set our hearts upon. We are asked to bear a price for someone we love that is tiny in comparison to the price Christ paid for us. We don't get the deal we feel we deserve. Or we get a deal much different than we expect. And God

arranged it all. That is **our moment**. And we let **that** define us for the rest of our lives. We cannot get over that thing. We think that **moment** gives us some kind of privilege to **not truly trust** our God. We have an out. We have an excuse. We say, but look what God did in **this moment**. Look at the pain or the frustration or the disappointment I faced. Look at that moment. I now have a reason, I have a right to be... and we can fill in the blank here. Full of self pity, rebellious, despondent, depressed, selfish, sneaky, disobedient.... And we base it all on what God calls **a moment**.

But what does God focus on?

with great mercies I will gather you.

with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,

Oh, praise God that He does not focus on **the moment** but He is using the **moment** to prepare us for His mercies, for His everlasting kindness. His moments seem long to us. But in perspective they are short. His eternity seems irrelevant to us. But praise God they are the most relevant thing in God's dealing with us. God never forgets His long term intention. And He is committed to **withholding that which we deserve** and providing that **which is far better** than we deserve.

⁹ "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.

¹⁰ For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

Do we see what stands out here? What we see is the good intention that God has toward His people. Just as God will never allow the world to be destroyed by water, He will never allow His covenant people to suffer His wrath. God will never remove His merciful regard from His people once the suffering servant has paid the sacrifice for them. They may ebb and flow in their fellowship with God, but they will never lose their relationship with God. God may kill His people in discipline, but He will not abandon them in relationship. As I write this I am looking out at the mountains that surround Pleasant Valley. When I look at those hills, I simply cannot imagine a force great enough to remove them. I know it is possible. But it would be cataclysmic. Verse 10 is basically saying, even in that cataclysmic event, even if this were to happen, even if something this drastically destructive were to happen, it would have **zero effect** on God's kindness towards his people. He might need to discipline them for their good. He may even kill them for their good. But His kindness will never be withdrawn in a permanent fashion. **God will**

never give up on you if you are His. You might make your life absolutely miserable by your refusal to submit to Him. But if you are His, and that is a bit risky if you are living in disobedience, but if you are His, God's kindness will not be removed from you. God's covenant of peace that was gained by Christ's death for your sins will not be removed from you.

Why is it that we focus on **the moments** of our disapproval with God's way of doing things when we have this Commitment from God, from His mouth for our good. We abandon God at the smallest little thing. "Look how someone treated me. Look at this hardship I must face. Look at this price I must pay." And there is God, totally committed to our welfare, making astounding promises regarding His commitment toward us.

What moment are you allowing to effect your fellowship with God? What won't you let go of? What gives you an excuse to disobey God or not trust God? What moment is that? When you face God at the entrance to eternal blessing, just imagine yourself giving voice to your gripe. Think about that right now. Just imagine yourself telling Christ your excuse. Imagine telling Him about **that moment** that you are fixated on and how it made you do all these other faithless things. Just think about how that will fly. Think about how you will feel even running through your speech in your head. Maybe today is the day to **let go of the moment** of your discontent. Maybe today is the day to fall at the feet of Christ in worship and admit that **you have no gripe**. Maybe today is the day to relish the Covenant of Peace He has established for you.

We are all here together as terrible sinners against the God of eternity. We do not deserve only a moment of anguish. We deserve an eternity of it. But what does God promise? What has the suffering servant won for us? Why do we have such a powerful reason to break out in exuberant song? Peace. Peace with God. No more reason for enmity.

Luke 2:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth **peace**, goodwill toward men!"

John 14:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ **Peace** I leave with you, My **peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 16:33 (NKJV)

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Romans 5:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Ephesians 2:14-18 (NKJV)

¹⁴ **For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,**

¹⁵ **having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace,**

¹⁶ **and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.**

¹⁷ **And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.**

¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

This is what the suffering servant in Chapters 52 and 53 has done for us. He has removed every obstacle so that we can have peace with God. And this peace is more than a feeling of peace, a feeling that all is well. It is also a state of peace. It is a state where God has no enmity toward us. Our sin, that great barrier between us and Him, has been removed. So even in this moment, no matter how difficult our lives might be, we live right now in a state where God is no longer against us. He is for us. We are at peace with the Holy Righteous God. So what was the gripe we had yesterday? What was the moment that had us so upset? You and I need perspective. We need to meditate on what our Suffering Servant has done and has promised to do for us. And we need to keep coming back to it. How often?

I will end with this thought from John Piper.

Satan devotes 168 hours a week trying to deceive you. Do you think you can maintain a renewed mind with a ten minute glance at God's book once a day.