

The Holy One of Israel in Your Midst

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Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 12:1-6

Preached on: Sunday, February 9, 2014

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We're going to be reading from Isaiah 12, starting in verse 1,

1 And in that day you will say: "O Lord, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. 2 Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'" 3 Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. 4 And in that day you will say: "Praise the Lord, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. 5 Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

Let's pray.

O Lord, you are our salvation. You are so wonderful. You have given us so many gifts. Lord, I pray that you would give us ears to hear and eyes to see what you have for us. Lord, I pray that you would be with the words that are spoken now, that they would be your words. Amen.

Isaiah 12 takes us into the world of the joyful praises of his people for their salvation, the remembrance that God's anger has been pacified and they are drawing water from the wells of salvation with joy. It's interesting that this last section in the first section of the book of Isaiah ends with the joys of those who experience the Holy One of Israel in their midst. Isaiah actually begins in a completely different way. Isaiah begins by telling of the hardships and the sorrows of the people who have drawn back from God. They have turned away backward, literally they have forsaken the Holy One of Israel but yet at the end the Holy One of Israel is in their midst so it speaks of two ways of living. When you go back to chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 especially, you see the hardships and the sorrows that come upon people who have not the Lord in their midst and how as they turned away backward, you know, what did they get for it? All they got for it were a bunch of frustrated and vain and irrelevant women. What did their men get for it? They got

themselves in a state of collapse and the protectors that they were meant to be has devolved into self-absorption that just causes more and more calamity and trouble in the people.

So it's interesting that this first section that forms chapters 1 through 12 begins with a picture of joyless collapse because the Lord has been forsaken, people have turned away backward. But when you turn toward him, something so wonderful happens. It's a song of joy and it's interesting, you know, in the first part of Isaiah, Isaiah is commanding a female individual, Zion, he's talking to the daughters of Zion and the female in chapter 3 is this daughter who is a disfigured mess and now he's addressing one who is at peace. The contrast is so remarkable. The daughter in chapters 11 and 12 is being fed from the root of Jesse. There is this life-giving source that pours forth goodness into the branch and the Lord Jesus Christ is the one pictured as giving life to his people. So again, you see this contrast between those who have turned away backward and those who have drawn near and the Lord is in the midst of them. So one thing running through this whole section is that through the corporate lives of those who gather together, who have turned toward the Lord, is that there is joy and it's not a groundless joy, it's not an empty joy at all. It's based on tangibles. It's based on the facts of their deliverance and what God has done and the ongoing refreshing that God brings to his children. So there is a testimony here of what happens to individuals and what happens to churches where the Lord is in their midst. There is nothing more defining in your life or mine or the life of this church as to this one thing: is the Lord in your midst? This is what is being spoken of here. That's why in verse 6 of chapter 12 it ends with this, "For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst."

So the health of the church is dependent upon what the church thinks is great. The health of an individual is dependent upon what that individual thinks is great. And if "great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst," then that makes all the difference in the world and, you know, when he is great in your midst, praise is glorious in the gatherings, hearts are moved and your soul is saturated with joy. So to me, I want us to think about as a church this whole matter of the Holy One of Israel in your midst, the reality of the presence of God. Here we are gathered on another Sunday morning. You know, we have gathered many times on Sundays and we'll gather many, many more times but the big question before us every time we gather is: is this the gathering about the greatness of the Holy One of Israel or is there something else going on? You know, there is nothing more refreshing and life-giving than a gathered body of people who have one thing on their minds, the greatness of the Holy One of Israel. His might. His beauty. His goodness. You know, we're really gathered for that purpose, to be a people for God's own possession who loves the one who has possessed us and who see the great possessions that he has given to us as well. You know, as a church we have to ask: what is it that diminishes his greatness among us? Anything that diminishes his greatness among us needs to be removed and that's a lifelong process, isn't it? That's the picture of the Christian life too as you become a Christian, you find out one thing that has diminished, his greatness in your life and you repent; you confess and you turn. Then time goes on and you discover something else that has diminished his greatness and then you confess and you repent and you move on. This is the life of a Christian. So even we as a church you have to ask: is

there anything that is diminishing his greatness among us? Because when he is great among his people, this is what you find, I've identified five things here that happen to you. You will praise and be comforted in verse 1. You will trust and not be afraid in verse 2. You will draw water from the wells of salvation, verse 3. Four, you will proclaim and exalt his name, verses 4 and 5. Finally, you will know why all these things have happened to you, verse 6, "For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

Now, let's just sort of get our coordinates about us for a moment. This chapter is really a continuation of chapter 11 and there was a song after the first Exodus. In chapter 11, there was the first time of deliverance, that was deliverance from bondage in Egypt but there's a second deliverance and that's deliverance of the Messiah when the root of Jesse emerges in time and space in history and during that time, during the time of the Messiah, another song will be sung and that song is recorded right here in chapter 12. So in the first Exodus, Moses says, "Behold, God is my salvation." In the second Exodus as a result of the mercy of Jesus Christ, it is so much the same only it's a deeper and broader. It's a better covenant with better promises. But you still say the same thing, "Behold, God is my salvation." In the first Exodus, your enemy, the accuser of the brethren, he gets thrown into the bottom of the sea. He gets shredded by God. God destroys his chariots. He wrecks him. He's wrecking the works of the devil. In the second Exodus, he does the same thing only he pours out his Spirit upon you, giving you even more victory over the devil as he works in your life.

Last week I said I don't think you would want to be Moses or Joseph because he was part of the work of God in the Old Covenant. I think that you feel better in the New Covenant than you do in the Old Covenant because you have the work of the Holy Spirit. But there is this work of salvation that is being depicted here in these chapters and here there's a new song that is put in your heart and the song says, "And in that day you will say: 'O Lord, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me.'" That's the new song that is in your heart and so the focus of this day when the Messiah reigns and he is recording what happens in your life when you turn to him. Now, the literary structure I think should be identified. It's a song with two stanzas. The first stanza has six lines and the second stanza has seven lines in it and the lines are the same length. The first part of the song is in the first person singular; it's what a person says to himself. In the second stanza in verses 3-5, it's in the second person plural. So in the first part of this song, it's what you say to yourself, you know, "In that day you will say," something to yourself. Then the second is what you say to others. It has to do with what you say because out of the mouth the heart speaks so these are things that exist in our hearts. They are things that happen in your hearts. Jesus spoke of it in John 7:38 when he said, "If anyone believes in me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." This is what comes out of your heart. You know, true Christianity begins in the heart but it always comes out in what you say. It begins with what you feel and what has happened to you in reality but then it transforms the very nature of your speech and you begin to speak differently to yourself and you begin to speak differently to others. So your whole life is changed. You're the same on the inside as you are on the outside. That's the beauty of Christianity. Christianity starts on the inside and works to the outside. Paganism just works on the outside.

So here's this picture that we have here. How do you summarize it? How about this, Psalm 89:15, "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, And in Your righteousness they are exalted." This is a picture of a people who are walking in the midst of the one who walks in the midst of his people, the Holy One of Israel. So that's it. So what happens when God is in your midst? When God is exalted among you? I've listed these things here that you have in your outline. First of all, you will praise and be comforted. For he is walking in your midst, you will praise him and you will be comforted. That's why he says in verse 1, "And in that day you will say: 'O Lord, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.'" Now, the first thing that you see here is the timing of it, "in that day." This time marker refers to the days of the Messiah. Most of the time this term "in that day" is referred to a day of judgment but Isaiah uses it very frequently to the time of the Messiah, from the time of the Messiah to the second coming. And Isaiah is using it in the same sense that he used it in chapter 10, "In that day a root of Jesse." It's that same time frame and you notice there is also kind of a structural element that Isaiah is working through as it's coming out of his mind and his heart that he speaks of "in that day" in chapter 11 and then twice again here in chapter 12. He's still speaking of the same thing. You can't disconnect chapter 11 from chapter 12. They really are part of the whole same message that Isaiah is giving here.

"In that day you will say," something and that's where we get to this first person here. He is speaking of a people who really have a personal story to tell. They are telling something about themselves. You know, every believer has a particular story to tell. This is very personal. This is personal salvation. It's individualistic in this sense. You know, Jesus says that he calls his own sheep by name, there is an individual element here that you stand before God as a single person in the world. It's reminiscent of Galatians 2:20 where Paul says, "For I have been crucified with Christ." I have. I've been crucified with Christ, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is a personal testimony. This is personal testimony of salvation and every person must experience this or they cannot be saved. If a person cannot say, "Oh Lord I will praise you. I will praise you for you are angry with me but your anger is turned away." This is a very personal kind of salvation and it's the foundation of everything else that comes in life, everything that comes out in your family life or in your church life really is a result of this one thing. God begins with the smallness of the human heart and then out of the resources of that heart turned toward God issue everything in life. It's not enough just to fix the things on the outside. You always have to go deep into the innermost being. That's where all of life issues from.

So this is really the foundation of joy in the heart, in a family, and really in a church. God is in the midst of us and there is joy. There is this testimony of anger, though. God was angry against sin. "Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away." This is sort of a way of saying that you're going to be awakened to remember the anger. You'll remember that God was angry with you. You will remember a time when God was angry

with you. Do you remember that time when the anger, the wrath of God rested upon you? Before his anger was taken away? What was that like to suffer under the heavy weight of his anger? You know, it's a remarkable thing that we would be called back to remember what it was like to be under the wrath of God. The wrath of God, of course, is a huge subject. You know, you remember what the wrath of God was like? Deuteronomy 28 speaks of what it's like. He says, "The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of the heart and you shall grope at noon day as a blind man gropes in darkness. You shall not prosper in your ways. You shall only be oppressed and plundered continually and no one shall save you." That's what it was like to be under the wrath of God. There was no one to save you. You tried to save yourself a thousand self-help ways and none of them worked. You go to therapists, you try to eat differently, you try to discipline yourself more profoundly and what does it get you? Nothing. Nothing like being in the midst of the presence of God and his mercy.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness and that's the reality that is being remembered. It's like Isaiah when he said, "Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live in the midst of a people of uncleanness. For my eyes have seen the King." When you see the Lord, you see your own wickedness and it's a picture of this living under the wrath of God. David called it the feverish heat of summer. It just makes us recognize that our greatest problem really is not ourselves, our greatest problem is God. Your greatest enemy is not yourself, it's God. God is your greatest enemy. He is the one who is avenging his own reputation and righteousness. God is your enemy. The Bible says in Psalm 7, he says, "God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready. He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts. Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood."

But God is angry with the wicked every day. Here is one of the greatest realities of the wrath of God, John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Here if you believe in the Son, you escape the wrath of God but if you do not believe in the Son, the wrath of God abides on you. Romans 1 tells of why and where of the wrath of God. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." Paul tells us who receives the wrath of God in Ephesians 5. He says the wrath of God will come upon "the sons of disobedience." Moses asks in Psalm 90:11, "Who knows the power of your anger?" And so here Isaiah is really painting a picture of someone remembering something in the past when the wrath of God was upon him and he says, "You were angry with me but Your anger has turned away and You comfort me." This is salvation by faith and it is turned away. This is the scandal of the cross that God would remove his wrath from sinners, that he would not be angry with his people. This is so scandalous. This is so incomprehensible to think that he wouldn't be angry with you. That his wrath would be turned away from you. What a miracle. What a beautiful thing.

Does this mean that God is never angry with his own people? You know, this text speaks of God's anger and that it is dissipated but is there a kind of anger that God has toward his people? The answer is, yes there is a kind of anger that God has toward his own people but it's a different kind of anger than the anger that is directed toward the ungodly and the unrepentant of this world. There are a number of examples of it. There is Moses when God wanted to kill him. There is God's anger against Aaron and Miriam when they were speaking against Moses. There was God's anger against David and Solomon. You know, Moses wasn't allowed to enter into the Promised Land because of God's displeasure in his lack of faith. So there is a kind of anger but it's not the same kind of anger that exists against the wicked.

There is a distinction that needs to be made between the propitiation of the anger of God toward sinners and his disposition toward them. You see these different examples that are there. There is anger over sin. There is anger over false worship. There is anger over false prayers. In Psalm 80:4, we read, "O Lord God of hosts, How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in great measure. You have made us a strife to our neighbors, And our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!" It's a picture of a people who have backslidden and there is a certain kind of anger that God has in the backsliding that we have. But it's not the same kind of anger against the wicked because his anger has been propitiated. He does discipline his children. He chastens us yet it's not with the same kind of wrath that he has against the wicked. He chastens the wicked to destroy them. He chastens his sons in order to correct them and turn them back into a better way.

Is it legitimate for a father to be angry toward his children when they sin? I think the answer to that question is in a way. Only in a particular way. Only if the anger brings forth a beneficial response. There is a terrible and defiling response in the anger that a father has toward his children. There is a righteous kind of anger. The Bible says, "Be angry but do not sin." There is a way that a father can be angry and not sin in the same way that God is angry with the sins of his children and yet it's a beneficial thing toward them. But God chastens us yet without the same kind of wrath. John Gill speaks of it this way, "God loves his people with an everlasting and unchangeable love and never alters or varies in it and yet may be angry, that is displeased with them, and show his resentment at sin committed by them by his chastisement of them and still continue his love for them for even that is done in love." You know, he chastises for the sake of his love not to destroy you.

There is also perhaps another element to it and that is that God's anger toward his own people has a short fuse. Psalm 30 says, "His anger is for a moment." The Bible says that he delights in mercy. Well, his anger toward the wicked never ceases. He is always angry at the wicked. He is not always angry with his children for his anger is but for a moment. But whom the Lord loves he chastises. John Calvin spoke of how chastisement against the godly and the ungodly might look the same but there are different motives behind it and there are different effects of it. You know, with the ungodly, his anger is perpetual and as Calvin says, they are forerunners of everlasting destruction. His judgments are just

foretastes of the coming destruction and perhaps he does it to turn them around. But with the godly, it's in shorter duration and it's designed to encourage their hearts as he says, by hope and by confidence so that they would know that God is gracious to them. Calvin says he punishes their sins for no other reason than to train them to repentance. Maybe it's like 1 Corinthians 11:32, "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." So the judgment of God is like the judgment in the Lord's supper where you examine yourself so that you would not be judged harshly, that you would examine yourself. It's a way that you judge. This is the way that God chastens but notice how he does it. He calls you to examine yourself, to see your sin on the one hand and then he gives you bread. And then he gives you wine. And he says, "Come. Come eat with me." That's the kind of chastisement of the Lord but the judgment against the wicked is not that. He throws into everlasting darkness.

So he says, "Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." This is another way of saying there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. This is the doctrine of propitiation that God's anger has been soothed. Romans 3:25 speaks of it, "Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Then he says, "Where is boasting then?" In other words, can you boast? No. No, because it was God whose anger was soothed by the death of his Son, his shed blood on the cross. That's how his anger is turned away, that Isaiah speaks of here because Christ has made atonement and someone has stood between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ, to make peace between the two. That's why Isaiah says that when the root of Jesse is seen, that his anger will be turned away and the curse is removed and Christ receives the punishment for God's demands. That's why Paul says to the Ephesians in 1:7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

Then you see this praise. He says, "O Lord, I will praise You." This is such a marvelous thing. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world to the praise of the glory of his grace. This is the praise that comes out of the heart of the believer. And when you realize there is no longer anger from God, there is only one response, comfort. "You comfort me." This is what God desires to do with his people, to comfort them. You know, in Isaiah 40 which ends the second section of Isaiah, it starts out, "Comfort, yes, comfort My people! Says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned." Comfort. This is the God of all comfort who comes to comfort his people.

So what happens when God is in your midst? Well, you will praise and you will be comforted. You will praise and you will be comforted. What a wonderful thing it is. Why would we ever not want to have God mighty in our midst? Then the second thing that happens when God is in your midst, when God is exalted, is that you will trust and not be

afraid. Verse 2, "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'" Now, notice the first word here "behold." When you have been comforted by God, what would be the natural reaction? Behold, you say, "Oh look, look at this." This beautiful word "behold" that appears so many times in the Bible. When something astonishing has happened, this word "behold" shows up. It's astonishing that you would not have anger, that he would comfort you and as a result you behold something that you know now that God is your salvation. He simply doesn't just forgive but he does something, he becomes something to you. He is your salvation. That's why John Piper wrote in his book, "God is the Gospel," God is your salvation. It is he and he alone that is your salvation.

But interestingly enough, the word "salvation" is Yeshua but he says "he has become my salvation" and that means that it's an ongoing thing. Yes, he did save you but he has become and will continue to become your salvation over and over again. He saved you over and over again. He works with you over and over again. This is the ongoing work of God in your life. He will continually be your salvation. Also, let's just make sure we understand what this means, is that the assurance of your salvation is God not yourself. The assurance of yours salvation is not your feelings about yourself. The assurance of your salvation is not your performances. The assurance of your salvation is God and his performances toward you in the sacrificing of his Son. Your salvation could never rest upon anything that you ever could do. I love that song we sang this morning, "Not what my hands have done." Not what my hands have done can do anything but what God has done. God is my salvation.

Then he says, "I will trust and not be afraid." Salvation and fearlessness go hand-in-hand. They are the marks of belief. "Because I am saved, I will trust and not be afraid." This is one of the "I wills" in Scripture. There are so many of them. But if you trust, you will not be afraid. If you do not trust, then you will be afraid. Afraid of what? Afraid of the wrath of God. You know, isn't it amazing that God would have us be a people who have been delivered from fear of the wrath of God? How happy can you be in a day knowing that? That really your only, truly the greatest enemy that exists would not be your enemy anymore and you stand in grace and wherever you walk, you walk in grace. What a wonderful thing that is. How many furrowed brows should that undo? How many fears should that dislocate?

"I will trust and not be afraid; 'For Yah,'" this is the short form of Hallelujah from the word "Jehovah." "For the Lord, Jehovah, is my strength and my song." He uses the name of God, Jehovah, the eternal, unchangeable God. You can completely rest on him. The solid foundation that never moves. If you stand upon him, you will never be shaken. Jehovah, the unchangeable God. Of course, this is from the song of Moses that we read earlier in our service in Exodus 15. Again, it's this picture of God destroying all of your enemies, taking the devil and throwing him in the sea, completely cutting him off but giving his people a highway dry shod. Removing all the obstacles and you walking right through the valley of the shadow of death. The whole focus here is on the action of God, what God does.

"He is my strength and my song." Again, we come to this idea of singing. You know, Isaiah sang a song in chapter 5 and now this is another song. There are many songs in the Bible. Maybe this afternoon when you go home, read Revelation 14 and you'll hear testimony of another song, the song of Moses, Exodus 15. There is the song of Deborah. There are a number of songs in the Bible. But what happens to you when God is in your midst? When God is exalted? Well, you will trust and not be afraid. That's the kind of people God would have us to be. "I will trust and not be afraid."

What else happens? Number 3: you will draw water from the wells of salvation, verse 3, "Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation." I've not been able to get that phrase out of my mind for weeks. I have so desired to get to this verse in Isaiah. It's such a wonderful thing. The imagery of water. Water the most important thing. You cannot live without it. Run out of water and everything stops. Run out of food and you've got a few days. Run out of water and you don't have very long. It's the most wonderful thing. It's cleansing. It's nourishing. It's refreshing. You know, David said, "I spread out my hands to you. My soul longs for you like a thirsty land." You know, this is a picture of a person in such need of refreshment. How often do you need the refreshing waters, the waters of life from the wells of salvation? When you get thirsty in this world, what do you do? Where do you draw from? The wells of salvation or the wells of the world? The worst things that happen to us happen when we get thirsty and we draw from the wrong well. We go to the wrong place. We get frustrated and we go to the wrong well. We become fearful and we go to the wrong well. What do you do when you get thirsty? Well, there are wells of salvation here and there is a way that you draw. You draw with joy. It's a joyful people; it's a mark of the people of God. You know, you will know they are Christians by their love. Joy, there you go. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control. That's how you know a Christian but here the picture is one drawing with joy like the man who found treasure in a field and with joy he sold everything he would have. John 1:16 speaks of it, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." This is the fullness of God in the heart that causes you to go to the right well. You go with joy. You choose with joy because you know it's the well of salvation.

The place that you draw, the well. Interestingly enough, the word that Isaiah uses here doesn't necessarily demand a well. When you say "well" most people in America, their mind goes to this round enclosure and then a deep hole underneath it, right? That's what we think about in terms of a well but Isaiah is using a word that's mostly used for springs or fountains, like that. You know, a well can be like that. Wells bubble up, the water comes up so it's a right use of the word but let's don't just think of this contained well. There is a flowing well of water like the water that flows from the throne of God and refreshes the people of God. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, Psalm 46, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn." There is this help from heaven, the well is issuing forth, the water flowing rivers. It's such a beautiful picture of salvation. It can mean headwaters or the source where it all comes, the crystalline sweet waters that come out of the wells of God. I would love to speak of the waters of life, the wells, the springs that are spoken of

in the Bible but time would fail us to do that but let me just say it like this in the same way that David did in Psalm 87 where he said that the singers and the players of the instruments say this one thing, "All my springs are in you." All my springs are in you. What a wonderful thing. "You will draw water From the wells of salvation." What are these wells of salvation? Well, they're everything that God has said and done, those are the wells. Go to him. The woman at the well said, "Give me water to drink."

Well, so up to now, Isaiah has been speaking in his own voice but now there is the plural he uses in this verse 3 that we're in now, "Therefore with joy you," so now this is the people of God. This isn't just individually. This is the whole people of God drawing water from the wells of salvation and it's the song of the humble people who are looking to one place, into the infinite stores of water, the never fading store of eternal life. David said, Psalm 16:11, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." That's why Jesus says, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." How many wells are there? I don't know. Millions. Billions. How many facets of the diamond of God in his glory are there? Have you found them all? No. You've not found them all. You will never be able to find them all. There are so many you can't know them all. You will spend your whole life long drinking of the well, of this well and that well and you'll never be able to exhaust the goodness of the taste of the kingdom of heaven. Have you ever read a verse like 50 times in your life and then you read it the 51st time and you saw something you never saw? It did something in your soul that you it never did before. It's because the wells are inexhaustible. When you go to them, they just keep on feeding you. What a marvelous thing it is to be saved, to be found in the nourishment of the branch, to be fed by the root. Well, that's what happens when God is in the midst of his people.

Then what happens? What happens when God is in your midst? When God is exalted? Number 4: you will proclaim and exalt his name, verses 4 and 5. You will proclaim and exalt his name. Verse 4, "And in that day you will say: 'Praise the Lord, call upon His name.'" Remember now, this is plural. "You" is now the whole people of God. Now, the whole people of God, they gather together and here's what they say. Here's what they say to one another. There is something that you say to yourself but there is also something you say to one another and here what you say is, "Praise the Lord, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!" Well, you know, the first act of worship is to from the heart praise God but once you are refreshed, then you refresh others and that's what is happening here in Isaiah's testimony. You know, those who have been stirred up, they now turn and they stir up one another. This is one of the wonderful things about being in a church is that you have others who stir you up. Have you been stirred up by somebody in the church? Have you? Like even this week? Has someone in this church stirred you up like this? Well, this is one of our functions. We're supposed to do this to one another. In fact, even our singing is supposed to be like that. When we sing, Paul says to the Colossians, that you're singing making melody in your heart to the Lord and you're instructing one another. You're actually teaching one another as you sing. You're not just singing to an audience of one. You are

singing also to one another to instruct them. To do this very same thing, to actually make commands toward one another. Have you ever thought of that? That when you're singing, you're actually commanding not just yourself but also your brothers and your sisters? Well, that's the corporate life. This is the plural nature of what we find here from verse 3 on to the end of the chapter. The knowledge of God is diffused out.

It says, "In that day you will say." Now, there are six imperatives here, six things that you say, six commands that you make. Now, think about it, just personalize it for a minute. What does this mean for us as a church? Here's what it means: we should be commanding each other in these things right here. Our lives should be such that we speak to each other for the purposes that are defined here in these six imperatives, these six commands. We are in one way counseling one another. It's the way that we deal with one another in the church. Are you dealing with your brothers and sisters like this? You know, I just want to ask all of us: is this how we're relating to one another in this church? Are we doing it? Are we performing this service for one another? You know, we've talked about how we speak to one another during our fellowship time on the Sabbath after the service is over. What is our conversation like? It's really important. You can just speak any old way you want for that would be one way or you could speak in a way that's explicitly fulfilling to the will of God in the lives of your brothers because we are not our own. We are members of the body of Christ. You are not your own. You belong to him but you also belong to one another and so that means that you have responsibilities for the way that you speak toward one another.

Here these six imperatives define the way that we should be speaking to one another in the church. We're going to go through these one by one but just think of what an encouraging place the church could be if the people always spoke to each other like this. I mean, think about God's design for the church and how beautiful it is. You're aware of all the "one another's," you know, there are over 50 "one another's." They just call you to such a remarkable life: be patient with one another; be kind to one another; love one another. There are so many things that God has for his people in his church and it seems like we always do well and then we don't do so well and we do well and we don't do so well. But let's make a marker right here in this text and say, "This is where we turned around our whole disposition and our life in the church. Right here." Could God do that with us? To where our conversations are so transformed that we speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord just like this?

Okay, the first imperative is this: praise the Lord. In other words, we're to be speaking to one another and saying, "Praise the Lord. You praise the Lord. You stop complaining, praise the Lord. You're downcast and low, start praising the Lord." We should speak to one another like this. This is a command that we are to make. It's the natural outflow of the wrath of God being turned away from you and you're drawing from the waters of salvation. So praise. God has designed praise for such marvelous things. You know, in Psalm 147, it's designed to heal the brokenhearted, to enfold the outcast and bind up your wounds. You know, often we draw so much from the wells of discouragement and everything is stacked against us and so we don't praise. So we can't even command one

another to praise. Like, here's what I hope: I hope that you husbands are married to a woman who does this in your life where she commands you to praise. Maybe, hopefully, you're a husband who is married to a woman who gets the same kind of ministry to call one another to praise out of the life of despondency. Psalm 147 says, "Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds." Praise is pleasant and beautiful says the Psalmist in Psalm 147.

So there is this command to praise and then the second imperative is: to call. "Call upon His name." You know, this is what we should do for each other, we should always be saying, "Call upon his name." Deep calls to deep. Call upon the name of the Lord. Believe him to be your greatest good. Believe him to be your salvation. Say, "God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid." Call upon his name. Again, that's an imperative. We speak to one another this way. You know, this is biblical counseling 101, honestly. You know, counselors today say, "No, find your deepest sorrow. No, go back to the wounds. Get in touch with the wounds. Give your primal scream." No. God doesn't say that at all. He says praise and call upon his name.

Then the third imperative is: declare. "Declare His deeds among the peoples." So this is what we're supposed to be doing with each other, calling one another to go out and declare his deeds among the peoples or among the nations. Thankfully we have people in this church who do this. You know, God forbid that we would have a church where this wasn't going on, where nobody was saying, "Declare His deeds among the peoples." Get out of your little comfort zone. Get out of your bubble. Go to the peoples and declare his deeds. Tell them how great God is. His works are wonderful. Psalm 40 says, there are so many they cannot be recounted in order. They are more than can be numbered. Declare his deeds among the people. So we have a divinely appointed responsibility to urge one another to declare the goodness of God among the nations. Last week, what I said that I felt like we as a church were not as faithful as we could be, should be, in the whole area of missionary activity but here again, we're supposed to say to one another that we would declare his deeds among the peoples, among the nations.

Number 4, the fourth imperative: make mention that his name is exalted. Make mentioned that his name is exalted. In other words, I'm supposed to say to you, "Make mention that his name is exalted." You're supposed to say to him, "Make mention that his name be exalted." You're supposed to say to her, "Make mention that his name is exalted." This is what we're being commanded to do.

Then the fifth imperative is: to sing. "Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things." So we should be asking one another to sing and you might say, "Well, I don't actually, I can't sing that well." But for some reason we are commanded to command one another to sing so maybe you don't like to sing, you don't think you're a very good singer but I regret to say that you have to sing. You have to sing. Every once in a while somebody comes into this church and they don't sing for different reasons. Maybe they heard a teaching

that you could only sing certain kinds of songs. We should always say to those people, "Sing. Sing in the congregation. Prioritize your unity with the body of Christ and sing."

"Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things." You know, J. I. Packer wrote a book where he said that nothing is more characteristic of reformation theology than singing. He talks about how singing rescues you from a somber way of life and while the church is the place where the Gospel is preached and the good news is proclaimed but it makes a people happy and so they sing. You know, people pretty much don't sing together in the church. I mean, if you go out, if you start singing anywhere, it's going to be really strange. Think about going into a restaurant singing. Well, people just don't sing. But we are commanded to command others to sing, even the people who really can't sing that well. Even the people who sing out of tune, they can't carry a note, I'll command them to sing anyway. So I know that we have people who claim that that's their trouble in this church and it actually is some of their trouble, for sure. This is the beauty of the body of Christ, you know, you have the tuned and the untuned all together. It's the rich and the poor and the wise and the unwise and the tuned and the untuned. It's a beautiful thing. It shouldn't bother us.

The sixth imperative: cry out and shout. Cry out and shout. "Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion." Inhabitant of Zion. To cry out and shout, in other words, to not be so quiet about it. You know, you might say, "I'm just a quiet person." Well, the quiet persons need to come up to speed. They need to change. God calls us to change a lot of times but there is a way that we cry out and shout. I'm not saying that we are all of the same personality and that everybody has to be exactly the same in their meter and tone and their exuberance. God has made us all different but let's just recognize that God has called us to command one another to cry out and shout. Let's make a big deal about this thing called the Gospel. It's a big deal.

Then the reason. "For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!" All of this happens when God is great. When God is the central focus of all that we do. When God is your greatest hope in life and in death. When God is your salvation. When God is the one who is providing all of your springs. You know, this is a result of God being in your midst. Now, this word "in your midst," midst, what is that all about? Well, it's used all over the Bible but it can mean in a physical sense, it can have to do with the emotions, your thoughts. The inward parts. The inner parts. God is in the midst of you. In other words, it's an intimate word of saturation being in you, with you. God is in your midst. He is there and I just want to suggest that he's speaking of Christ in you and that he is exalted in you and among you as the people of God. It's when God is central to everything among his people. All of these things happen. You will praise and be comforted. You will trust and not be afraid. You will draw water from the wells of salvation. You will proclaim and exalt his name because the Holy One of Israel is in your midst.

You know, what's the vision of the elders for this church? There it is right there: God in the midst of you. God the center of everything. God being honored and praised. God being spoken of in the heart, in the house, in the community. God the center of everything. Trying to remove everything that distracts from God out of our church life,

out of our personal relationships. To draw one another unto God. To speak of God. This is the kind of life that we desire.

Now, let me give you some applications real quickly here. Notice God's intentions in salvation: comfort. He wants you to know his comfort. He wants to deliver you from your fears. Secondly, this is a good opportunity to examine our hearts to see if we have the delights of the love of God within us. You know, do we come together and worship because he is in our midst? Do we practice hospitality because he is in our midst? Do we pray? Do we conduct our family worship? Do we give our treasures? Do we go to the abortion clinic because he is in our midst? Don't be deceived into thinking we're justified by our works. Everything comes out of these springs. Let me ask you: can you sing the first part of the song? Can you sing it truly and you are moved by it because it's in your heart? Are you singing the second part of the song? Are you singing the second part of the song? The Holy One of Israel is in your midst. The true foundation, the unchangeable, holy God is in your midst.

So here we are, we're living life, we're trying to live life out here in this community during the 21st century, it's 2014 right now, and there really is one supremely important thing for us when we gather, strip away all of your expectations, all of your desires for this church and reduce it down to one thing: God. God. God is in your midst. Long for that and all will be well. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn."

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your wonderful work of salvation calling sinners to yourself, healing them, coming to them as the Rock of their salvation and then doing such wonderful things, drawing out praise and giving comfort, fostering trust and banishing fear, providing rivers of living water unnumbered, putting a song in our hearts to proclaim the praises and being with us. Oh Lord, we thank you for God with us. Amen.

Let's take a few moments in silence to meditate on these things and then we'll go to our time of further instruction.