

Isaiah 54 11-17 Jan 13

Isaiah 54:11-17 (NKJV)

11 "O you afflicted one, Tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, And lay your foundations with sapphires.

12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.

13 All your children *shall be* taught by the LORD, And great *shall be* the peace of your children.

14 In righteousness you shall be established; You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; And from terror, for it shall not come near you.

15 Indeed they shall surely assemble, *but* not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake.

16 "Behold, I have created the blacksmith Who blows the coals in the fire, Who brings forth an instrument for his work; And I have created the spoiler to destroy.

17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. *This is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness *is* from Me," Says the LORD.

Remember how last week we talked a month ago about the barren woman who was told to rejoice? There was something in that passage that I passed over. But it was too important to go without notice.

Look at verse 6 in Isaiah 54. **Isaiah 54:6 (NKJV)**

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.

Now when we take this verse out of context, this passage does not seem all that remarkable. But when we look at it **in** context, it is absolutely moving. Who is this that this verse is being said to? Was it the faithful wife who had been loyal to her husband all these years and something unfortunate befell her? No. That isn't the context at all. This was an unfaithful bride who had no concern for her husband or what would honor Him or please Him. Now look at verse 6 in **that** context. Look at what God focuses on. He does not focus on how the bride has offended Him, although that is true. He does not express His displeasure, although He certainly had the right to. He could have truthfully laid into her for her previous decisions. But He did not. He had already disciplined her for her actions. She has already received the

consequences of her unfaithfulness. Now God addresses her in an amazingly empathetic fashion. God has called you, Isaiah says, like a woman who had been forsaken by her husband and suffering all the pain that circumstance would result in. He called you like a young wife having been rejected by her husband. Wow. God can do that? When He has caused us to truly repent of who we were, He can now address us caringly and empathetically? He can be tender to us who have only been cruel to Him? He can meet us where we are and heal the wounds, even though the wounds were of our own choosing? Yes. That is the beauty of coming to the end of ourselves. That is the beauty of repenting about the truth of ourselves. That is the beauty of confessing our sins.

Think about this. When children in our care misbehave, do we hope that they keep misbehaving so we can keep disciplining them? Even a decent human parent would not do that. Do we remind them every waking moment of their bad behavior? No. That really isn't what we are shooting for. We want their hearts to change first. Then when we know their hearts have truly changed we know that their behavior will gradually change as well. And when we are confident that repentance has happened, we want them restored to fellowship with us. We want to meet their needs and heal their woes. We want peace with us restored.

Well God is like that but much better. He has no needs. He has perfect knowledge. So He knows exactly when that point has been crossed where He can now restore our fellowship. He knows when He can begin to heal the harm we have done to ourselves by our treatment of Him. He knows when His empathy will have a positive effect on us. He knows that the worst thing He can do to us is to coddle us in our rebellion against Him. He will not show sympathy for us while we are in a state of resisting Him. At the same time, when we clearly come to an understanding of **our part** in our past sinful choices, and we are repentant of that reality, God no longer needs to continue His discipline of us. He no longer needs to remind us of our sin. And we should take our ministry lead from Him, first to be sure never to coddle a person choosing to sin. If God loves us, He will discipline us when we rebel against Him or choose to disobey Him. And we should work with that process. And second, when true accurate repentance of our true selves has had its way, we should also work alongside God's work for comfort and restoration. If God loves us, He will want fellowship restored as soon as possible for our sakes. And God surely does love us.

I thought this truth might be very encouraging to us this morning.

Ok, on to our text.

Isaiah 54:11-17 (NKJV)

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12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.

Look at verse 11. Do you see the contrast here? "O you" He says. Then "Behold I" He says. And therein lies our great hope. Look at the shape we put ourselves in. Tossed with tempest and not comforted.

Maybe this should be the slogan on all News sites. Tossed with tempest and not comforted. Fox News, NBC, CBS, CNN- Tossed with tempest and not comforted.

Isn't that the state we gravitate to. There is a way that **seems right** to us, **profitable** to us, a way that **will make us happy, secure, give us pleasure, give us power**, whatever we are inclined to. But the way always leads to ultimate destruction. And some ways get us there quicker than others.

To do the right thing so often looks just the opposite to us. It looks like it will provide nothing of value to us. It looks like it will deprive us of what we crave, what we feel we must have, what our flesh wants. But in the end it provides wonderful results. Think about the decisions you made that were based on your fleshly passions or desires or emotional or physical cravings. Think about those things you would not deny yourself because denying yourself seemed pointless. Isn't that what we struggle with all the time? And what do our **failures** to be faithful and obedient **provide us**? Nothing of ultimate value. And what do they leave us over time? **Tossed with tempest and not comforted.**

That is us. That is what we have left to look forward to if left to our own devices. That is the "**O You**" part of the story. But fortunate for us that is not the end of the story. We have the "**Behold I**".

Here we see that our "Behold I" has a building plan. And for **this building**, as opposed to **our building**, money is no problem. Look at the building materials.

colorful gems, sapphires. rubies, crystal, precious stones. Not too shabby. Do you get the idea that God wants us to truly believe that He will make any price we must pay worth it? This is the city **He** is preparing for **us**. No expense is being spared. The building materials are things of beauty. I think they will probably especially appeal to people like Ruth. I am sure everything will match and be aesthetically pleasing. I think it is intended to be awe inspiring.

And **who was responsible** for providing this destination that we could never afford, we could never design, we could never gain by our own efforts? Why our God of course. Our **Behold I**. Our “sit back in praise while I show you my love for you.” Oh why aren’t we content to wait? Why won’t we bet on God? Why won’t we take on the hard parts of our lives in trust that God will make every effort worthwhile for us? Will we never believe? Will we never get the idea that our God has amazing things for us to behold?

Notice too that this is not an individual gift. This is a gift to a group. This is a gift to a family. Those people who think that Christianity is a personal matter just don’t get it. While God is saving a bunch of individuals, He is not saving them to emphasize their individuality. He is saving them so that corporately they can bring praise to God.

I have been talking to Carla a little about this lately. We as humans all want to be loved by others because we are so intrinsically wonderfully special. What we sort of really want is to be worshipped for our amazing specialness. But for the most part that is just a lot of hogwash. Think about it. Where does God love us because of our intrinsic value? I do not know of a verse that says that. God does not love us **because of us**. God loves us **in spite of us**. And where are we told to love each other because our intrinsic specialness? Again, I don’t know of a verse like that. We are told to love each other because Christ loves us. Our motivation for our love for each other is always the specialness of Christ. If Christ loves you, and I love Christ, I must love you. It is pretty simple really.

When I was young I was an idiot. You might contest here and say, but Jon you are still an idiot. And all I can say is, believe me, I could be worse of an idiot. Let me tell you about when I was younger.

I used to critique how other people treated me based on some assumption that I held that people should value me because I am so special. They should know what a wonderful specimen of human being I am and put me in the forefront of their awareness. And when they would not, I would resent their treatment of me and blame it on them. And naturally, since I was always looking at how I was being treated, I would sulk and pity myself and do all the things that psychiatrists now call poor self esteem. But my problem was not that I had poor self esteem. My problem was that I had **constant** self esteem. I was always thinking about **me**. Since then I have learned that we are pretty much **desired by others** to about the same degree that we **provide something of value** to others. Now lots of people desire things that I cannot provide for them. So I will never be valued by them. And that is fine. But inside the church of Christ I can provide a representation of Christ based upon

the gift of the Spirit He has given me. And to the degree I exercise that gift, people find me useful in their walk with God. And when I am useful, they experience that I have value. Now you people who are Christ's are required to love me. You must look out for my best interest at the expense of your own because Christ did that for you. But I really don't want that to be a drag for you. I would rather at least be a mixed bag. I carry with me a boatload of jerkiness and offense. But I want to provide you with everything I can based on what Christ has given me. As we all do that together, church looks like family. As we do that individually, we see that our value is not limited to just me and Jesus, but my value is being a useful part of a whole. And as we provide things of value, we feel valuable. As we provide things of value to others, they will perceive us as being valuable to them. That is how it works. We don't have any reason to expect that people will just naturally value the intrinsically wonderful us. That really might not even exist. They will experience our **functional value** as we provide **things of value to them**. Our young people live in a culture that is in a fog about this. They are taught that they are wonderful because they breathe. That is just not how anything works. It is no wonder they are disappointed when they find out that not everyone around them worships their wonderful selves. And it is also no wonder that they are so **despondent** given the unrealistic expectations they have grown up with. Our value, our usefulness, is found and experienced through our commitment. And the greater of value the thing is that we are **committed to**, the greater value **we will have**, no matter who appreciates it. So, you see, this city is not being created for just you or me. The houses are not estates with thousands of miles between them. God is building a city for us to live in together. We are all intended to be in this together. That is how God wants it.

¹³ All your children shall be taught by the LORD, And great shall be the peace of your children.

¹⁴ In righteousness you shall be established; You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; And from terror, for it shall not come near you.

¹⁵ Indeed they shall surely assemble, but not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake.

We need to go to Jesus to get the proper interpretation of verse 13. This always makes my job easy. It is easy to know we have the right interpretation when Jesus gives it.

John 6:44-45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and

I will raise him up at the last day.

⁴⁵ **It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'**

Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

Now if I were to interpret verse 13 without Jesus's words I would have focused on the wonder that the Lord would possibly instruct the people of God. But Jesus's words put a different focus on it. The focus is that **because the Lord teaches them they become the children of God**. In other words, it is the Lord's teaching, or the fact that it is the Lord's intentional work of teaching them that they come to the Lord at all. We see that the Lord is **the cause**, not **the aid**, of salvation. The religious leaders of Jesus's time knew the word of God, but they were not taught the word of God by God. They had the mental capacity to teach themselves the words on the paper. They knew through a fleshly understanding what it said. But they were not changed by it. When the **Lord** teaches us the word, He teaches it to us in such a way that we are **changed by it**. If we are people of God, it is **BECAUSE** we have been taught the word by God. That is the point in what Jesus is saying.

If the Lord teaches us the Word, the Word leads us to Christ. Any other understanding of the Word is not the work of Christ. It is just the understanding of flesh or doctrines of demons. Only the teachings of God's word by God have a saving effect.

And what will the result be? Why, it will be peace of course. **And great shall be the peace of your children**. We already dealt with the concept of peace with God earlier in this passage last week. What a wonderful result. How good it is that we can imagine ourselves before the judgment throne of Christ without fear because He is not our enemy. He is our friend. Our enmity has been done away with by His work on the cross and by His work in our souls to call us by faith into relationship with Him.

¹⁴ **In righteousness you shall be established; You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; And from terror, for it shall not come near you.**

From what I understand of this, the emphasis is on the behavior of the people. We know that we are saved by the righteousness of Christ. But as such we are called to be people who live righteously, rightly, doing the right things. And it is because of Christ's righteousness, because of the peace He has granted us with Him, that we have both the **incentive** and the **ability** to live a godly life. So **God's people** will be made by **God's teaching** into a people who live to serve Him willingly. They will be established into that way of life.

Now when this happens there is nothing to fear from our enemies. Now it looks to me that this is talking about our ultimate destination in the way that the city is described. Ultimately we will be protected from an environment where the enemies of God have any sway. Are you tired of fighting the enemies of God in your life? Are you tired of struggling against sin? Are you tired of seeing the oppression of the enemy effect those you love? This will not always be.

Those who are not God's will not be protected from the oppression of the devil or the terror of his kingdom. They are not promised that it will not come near them. But we are told that we will be totally and eternally protected from such an influence. And praise God that it will be so. That is one reason to look forward to the day of our death. The negro spiritual has it right "All my trials soon be over."

15 Indeed they shall surely assemble, but not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake.

Now this verse puzzles me. This is like many verses in Isaiah. If this is in eternity, it makes no sense. And if this is not in eternity, then do we have the rest of the passage correct? I cannot say that I know for sure. Many prophecies are actually divided into more than one time period. But I do know for sure that there have always been enemies of God. And as long as there are enemies of God there will be enemies of God's people.

What God is promising here is that in this period of time when God restores His people that their enemies are no longer fulfilling God's judgment against His people. He says they are gathering but it is not because of me. In other words, I am not sending them or using them. And since neither of those things are true, the only alternative left is to destroy them. And that is how God is toward those attacks in our lives. If they will not serve to accomplish **something good**, they are prohibited from ever getting to us.

When God's people are living in God's kingdom the enemies of God will never do them permanent harm. And when God's kingdom has come to its fulfillment, the enemies of God will no longer have **any power at all** to do any harm at all to the people of God.

16 "Behold, I have created the blacksmith Who blows the coals in the fire, Who brings forth an instrument for his work; And I have created the spoiler to destroy.

17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness is from Me," Says the LORD.

In every trial, the first thing we need to get is the perspective from where God sits. Remember when Hezekiah received his letter from the devil? Where did He take it? He took it to God to get His perspective. That is always what we need. Because it is from God's perspective we gain peace and understanding. We can see it in light of what it is, instead of what it looks and feels like. I am going to do something highly unusual this morning. It keeps the elders on their toes.

I want to address some questions to Brad. It is about what God took Him through a few years ago.

Brad, How would you describe Mr. Maleté's treatment of you during and after Hurricane Sandy?

Did you ever think that he would influence the governor to do what he did? Were any of these people intending to do you any good in their decisions regarding your fate?

Can you see that they did you any permanent harm?

How so?

Can you see any ways God has used that for good in your life?

Do you think you are more prepared to be with Christ than you would have been if this had never happened?

When all this happened, did you see how this could possibly be used for great good in God's hand?

As I was studying this passage, Brad's situation came to mind. He clearly was dealt with by people who intended him harm due to their own pride and ego. God allowed these people in their places during this period of time. God directed the path of that hurricane, or at least allowed the course to follow its natural path. Not a single bit of it was out of God's hand. And had we been seated with God at the time and saw all of His intentions of all of the life events during that period, we would have been in total peace. But that is not where we abide. We can only see the here and now. We can **read about** and **remember** God's good purposes. But we do not see those **by sight**. We see them **by faith**. And often that is very hard to keep in perspective.

What Isaiah does in our text is allows us into heaven's courts. We see above the chaos and apparent random acts of cruelty into the heart and intention of God.

And what we see are how God regards the enemies of His people. Now the enemies have no idea this is going on. But God's friends should. Here we see a blacksmith forming a metal weapon against Israel. God created that man. While the man focuses on his power to create a weapon, he has a tendency to forget that he himself was created by someone. God creates the spoilers. Just

as God created the players in Brad's life event. He made those men, even though they probably did not spend much of their time considering that humble truth.

That is the backdrop in which God says this:

17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness *is* from Me," Says the LORD.

When we are ushered into the throne room of God we gain perspective. These people God creates are tools **in God's hands** even more so than the weapons they create are tools **in their hands**. The weapon makers, the intended harmers of God's people, often think they act independently. In their pride and arrogance they think that **they are** and **there are none besides**. But they are so very wrong.

It is because God has created every human being and God has absolute control over every human being that we can live in peace without fear. Can they do us harm. Yep. If God lets them. Is that harm really ultimate harm if God allows it? Nope it is not. How do we know? God says it is not. **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)**

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

Now I have one more question for Brad. What award did you win by those who know best what kind of work you were doing during Hurricane Sandy?

Look at what God says in verse 17. **And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD**

I know that Brad's situation is not a perfect illustration of what this says. But I just wanted to show how **it is just like God** to vindicate His people. God will condemn those who in their hatred condemn us. He will show what they say to be untrue. And He will show them to be untrue. I think of times when people have described me in ways that are not at all true. I once had a witch, at least that is how she described herself, at a local high school tell me all manner of character flaws I had. And not one of them was true. I could have given her an accurate list but it didn't seem to be a fitting time or place for such a thing. My point is, God will put the human accusers and the accuser of our souls, the devil, in their places at His appointed time. That is the education we can only get from God's throne room. We won't figure this out. We won't sense it. It can only be revealed to us from God's word.

When bad people attempt to do bad stuff to us, we need to get God's throne room perspective. We have to see it from where God sees it. Only then will we have peace. Only then can we love our enemies because we realize they ultimately have no power over us that they were not given by a loving Father. And we close out with this wonderful truth.

This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness *is* from Me," Says the LORD.

This is what God is doing from His throne room. This is what He will be certain to see that it happens. God will treat us like He treats all of those He loves.

Now how can we be sure that we have not blown it so badly that He has given up on us? How can we know that He has not rejected us and will now throw us to the wolves. How can we know He has not given us into the hands of our enemies for our destruction?

He says- **their righteousness *is* from Me**

That is our great confidence. Christ died for our sins. We have taken his white robe of righteousness for our own. And our sins cannot be punished twice. It would be unjust of God to reject us if we are truly His own. Now we cannot play games with this. Our sin should drive us to quickly repent. We cannot have assurance of our salvation if we do not deal seriously with sin. But if we are a child of God, if we are committed to living in obedience to God having been changed by the resurrection force of Jesus Christ, we can rest in complete and total confidence in the righteousness of Christ, even in the face of our greatest enemies.