

**Isaiah 61:10-11 (NKJV)**

**10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, And as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels.**

**11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.**

**Isaiah 62:1-7 (NKJV)**

**1 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns.**

**2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.**

**3 You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.**

**4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.**

**5 For *as* a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.**

**6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,**

**7 And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

Why do you exist? Really, deep down every morning when you wake up, what is the reason for you being alive and breathing on that day? What do you really believe about that?

Scripture tells us what the world apart from God lives for- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Some people reduce that down to money, sex and power. But I think it is a little more complicated than that. The world apart from Christ lives for those things that satisfy them on this earth. I think that is some of what is being lovers of this world and that is why it is so dangerous.

So why do YOU exist?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism captures it best I think-

Q. 1. What is the **chief end of man**? A. Man's **chief end** is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

This is why we breathe. When we look at our bodies in the mirror, this is what they are for. When we are free to think anything we wish, this is what we are **thinking** for.

Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God and the second was to love people like we love ourselves. Do you see it? We exist for God's glory. We exist for the pleasure of God.

Do you ever feel worthless? Do you feel life has no meaning? That may be because you are not living obediently to God. You are not **thinking** as God has told you to think. You are not **living** as God told you to live. But we say, I do not have this certain **skill**. I do not have this **ability** that someone else has. I do not have this **virtue**. Yeah. So what. Since when does that mean that you cannot live for the glory and pleasure of God. If He **made you**, do you really want to tell Him that **the way He made you** is faulty for the purpose of His own pleasure? Does that sound a little stupid to you?

We are not created for our own pleasure. If we were, then maybe our gripes would be legitimate. But we aren't. In fact, "Those who live for their own pleasure are dead while they live" scripture says. We fool ourselves when we make our **dissatisfaction about how we are made** "something spiritual".

Like when we think that "I wish I could be all these other things so I could be more useful to God". That is usually just flesh in disguise. We are comparing **what other people are** and **we want what they have**. It is just mental hocus pocus to keep us from seeing what is really going on behind the curtain. We are the trickiest people we know.

Our chief end is to glorify God. And no matter who we are and no matter how we are made, if we are **in Christ** we can fulfil this purpose. We can serve Christ like no other person can serve Christ. And that is why we exist.

Now notice what the chief end is not. It is not to have a good marriage, or a good family, or a wonderful retirement, or to give money to good causes, or to do evangelism. Those might all be things Christians work toward, but they are not the chief end. And when the good replaces the best, we find ourselves in a deceptive distraction. We think we are being **holy**. But we are really being **disobedient**.

Look at the story of Mary and Martha. What did Jesus say about all the wonderful service Martha felt compelled to do? **Luke 10:41-42 (NKJV)**

**41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.**

**42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."**

Mary understood. She was living for the chief end of man. She was glorifying God by her choices.

Let's look at our lives this morning. What is really **most important** to us? Is it the **main thing**, or **one of the peripherals**? Is it **God**, or is it **anything else**?

How do you know what it is? What gets the lion's share of your time and energy and emotion and money?

We are going to do something unusual this morning. We are going to jump right to the middle of our text.

**1 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns.**

This verse is an example of knowing one's proper priorities, knowing what one's purpose is. Isaiah is saying "For Zion's sake" I will essentially burn myself out. Here Isaiah is talking about prayer. He will continue to pray and not stop until Zion fulfills the purpose it was designed for. But the principle also holds out to **working** for the Kingdom as well as **praying** for the kingdom.

Now what is Zion? It is the city of God, and for us it is the Kingdom of God, the church. And ultimately it is God's will on this planet. So it is for God Himself that we live.

And Isaiah says, I am not going to shut up about this. I am not going to drop it. I am not going to allow it to go to a back burner. I will keep it at the front of my attention. And I will not stop until the church, God's people in service to God, fulfill their function to this earth. And that purpose is not to just **self sustain**. The goal is for the church to **represent God** to the world around them. This is to be God's representative, His ambassadors to the **lost world outside** the church and the **found world inside** His church.

That is Isaiah's way of describing loving God first and people second. And look how it is couched. It is not a bunch of individuals that Isaiah is compelled for here. It is a city of God. It is a group of believers.

Look at this.

**2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.**

This isn't talking about individuals. He isn't singling out the special ones. No. He is talking about the church. And He is talking about the huge impact that this fellowship of light will have on the darkness. The world will be impacted

when the church carries out its purpose. **We will be as useful as we are submitted.** That is the beauty of our walks in Christ. We don't need to be designed differently than we are. We simply need to be **submitted AS we are.**

Now how do we live this out?

We have been talking a lot about church involvement and participation lately. And we live in a tricky world. We live in a world where churches have flavors. And we grow up thinking we can pick between McDonalds and Burger King and we can pick between Baptist and Assembly of God. Whichever one suits our tastes. Because after all, isn't church **about us**? Isn't it about meeting **our** needs? Isn't it about suiting **our** taste? Isn't it about services **for our family**? Isn't it about **our comfort** or **our feelings** or our whatever.

But oddly enough Paul never advised the church to break into sub churches when they were having trouble. He didn't tell the Corinthians, yeah maybe you should break up into the Paul lovers, and the Apollos lovers, or even the Paul haters. He didn't say you who are **experienced in gifts** should break away so that you don't make the others uncomfortable. He didn't say you who are **rich** ought to have your own church. What was his appeal? I Cor 13. He talks about love. He talks about Loving God and Loving People. That is Paul's answer in the church.

And Paul doesn't suggest they become enamored with some **universal church**, although He does appeal for help with other missions going on elsewhere. Paul gives instructions in all the epistles for how to serve God by being an integral part of **the local church**.

You see, **Universal** church fellowship is to **local** church fellowship what **Facebook** friends are to **true** friends.

The universal church doesn't know who you are. They don't know your successes and failures. They are easy to impress. They are easy to get strokes from. You can have a **sense** of comradery without having any **real** comradery. Your **stated intentions and wishes** are all that are required to be thought well of. And you can create the exact impression you want to create and reap the fruit of the impressions you create. It is easy to get "likes" by involvement in the universal church.

The local church, on the other hand, are a bunch of people whose flaws are impossible to miss. They are going to require actual work and sacrifice. They will require, well, **love**. They will be inconvenient. And we are likely to have to sacrifice for them.

On the other hand, these people will know us as we truly are. They will accept our sinful selves in such a way that lets us know we are truly loved as we

really are. It will be more than a sentiment. They will rebuke the real us. They will comfort the real us. They will bear the price of truly loving us. Our scars will hurt them. They will share the pain and remorse we feel. And they will truly feel our sorrows.

It costs much less to be in the universal church, much as it costs much less to be a facebook friend. But it is only the **local church** that carries the weight to true ministry to the human condition, our condition. It is the local church that are Jesus hands and feet to us.

We see through scripture that it is assumed that those who are followers of Christ will be tied into a local church. We cannot read the epistles without seeing that they are either **addressed** to churches or they **refer to believers in the context of churches**. They are not written outside the context of local churches. Now commitment to **attending and ministering in a local church** is not the highest priority. Paul and Barnabas were sent from a local church to do another ministry. We have to assume that the ministry was more important. Fulfilling the Great Commission may be a good reason to depart from the fellowship of a local church. The Acts church split into a thousand pieces when persecution struck. If the highest priority was fellowship in the local church, we can assume they would have stayed there and died together. But that is not the case. There are examples of people like Aquilla and Priscilla who moved around as well. They seemed to be bi-vocational people involved in church planting. And I would think it is safe to assume that since scripture says that a person is worse than an infidel if they do not take care of their families, there are times to switch churches due to carrying out our responsibilities to our families or potential families. Marriage could easily be another reason. In order for a couple to fellowship together one may need to leave the church they are in. There are probably other reasons as well. But the bond of church fellowship should not be easily broken. The general assumption in scripture regarding church involvement seems to be you grow where you are planted unless the church turns out not to be submissive to Christ or a higher priority presents itself. It is not to be a flippant thing, no matter how our culture might present it. The burden for those leaving a church is on **those who are leaving**. They will have to give an answer to God for a faithful reason that they moved from where they were to some other arena. There are many good reasons. And there are also many bad ones.

So for Zion's sake we pour out our lives. We exist for the **Glory of God** among the **people of God**, in communion with **the kingdom of God**, and we are to be

missional about taking God's Glory everywhere with every energy. The outsiders should experience the Glory of God by how we represent Him. Now, let's go back to the beginning of our text.

**Isaiah 61:10-11 (NKJV)**

**10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, And as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels.**

I don't know why but many commentators say that this is the Messiah speaking. I don't see any reason for that. Matthew Henry takes the safe route and covers both options. But I think it is pretty safe to see this as a description of the redeemed.

I don't think we will ever get tired of pointing back to the source of all good changes in our lives. And it is always the Lord. It is always the fingerprints of Jesus. Here is the default heart response when we focus on what God has done for us. **Rejoicing and joy.** Is that your heart's condition? If so, I'll bet you have been thinking about Jesus. If not I'll bet you haven't been.

Look what Christ has done. He has clothed us like the clothes of the bride and groom. This is not shabby stuff. This is not just adequate. These are clothes of a lifetime. I know that Carla has never paid as much for any dress as she did for her wedding dress. Which, due to Carla's practical nature has also clothed 2 of our daughters for weddings. And I certainly have never rented a tux for anything but this one time event in my life. But even this is **small** in comparison to the party that was thrown in a Jewish wedding. I am very much looking forward to Randy Millwood's sermon next Saturday evening on the bride of Christ. I think he will enrich our understanding of the significance of these texts.

Isaiah appeals to this imagery to reveal the glory of the clothing. In other words, we are dressed way better than we could ever be hoped to be clothed. It is like Bill Gates stepped in and purchased the best there is for the bride and groom. Except these clothes have spiritual substance. They are **salvation** and **righteousness**. These are saving clothing. These are clothing that allow us into the presence of God, into His wedding feast. These are amazing duds.

**11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.**

Here we see the predictability of God's plan coming to fruition. The glory of God **will be** accomplished. Righteousness and praise forever **will be** the

ultimate end. It is as predictable as the way seeds are planted and grow. The point is that it is **inevitable** and it is **predictable**. This will not cease to happen. God is going to be glorified, even in front of nations who have mocked Him. Nothing is going to stop this plan.

Isn't it so good to know that we are involved in a plan that **cannot fail**? We don't know what else may happen on planet earth. But we know that **this** is going to happen. And no one on earth can stop it.

**<sup>1</sup> For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns.**

**<sup>2</sup> The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.**

**<sup>3</sup> You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.**

So here we see what we first looked at. Isaiah is going to pour His life into getting behind what God has intended. Does the church look like it should right now? No. At least not in our neck of the woods in America. People add Christ to their lives hoping that He will improve their enjoyment of life and will protect them from bad things happening. They pick and choose their church experiences, but very few are committed to **laying down their lives** for the good of the church no matter what it costs. Few are willing to live like Christ did.

People treat true Christian commitment, the commitment to **do the right thing no matter what it costs**, as something that **exceptional** Christians do, instead of what **real** Christians do. Our standard has come way down from the standard that the Bible paints.

It is amazing how far from the true gospel most church-going peoples **expectations are** of **God** and of **their own commitment to God**. But we are to be like Isaiah. Our prayers should be that the **church is purified**. Our prayers should be that we should be **broken and remade in Christ's image**. It should be that **Christ be glorified** by His church everywhere, beginning in our hearts and in our lives and in our church isles.

When that happens, then all manner of good things happen. Christ gets seen as He truly is. And that is great.

Verse 3 seems to begin to move back into marriage language. Brides were something that were to be **credits to the husbands**. It is likely that the bride is being talked about as being seen as **a crown and diadem** in the hand of

God. Notice that **they are valued**. That they are something that **God shows off**. But they represent **something of Himself, attributes of His**.

But look at verse 4. This is something we can allow to thrill our hearts.

**4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.**

Do you know what **Hephzibah** means? Let this sink in. It is a pet name for the Lord's wife. It means **"My delight is in her."**

This is the picture. Our past is called Forsaken. This is the picture of a bride who was unfaithful to her husband. And he rightfully rejected her as a result of her dishonor of him. She deserved everything she got. She asked to be forsaken and so she was. She didn't see what a big deal her faithfulness to her husband really was. So she treated it with disdain. Like this bride, so was the land. It was desolate because Israel had rejected her God, so her land was desolate. All of the inhabitants were transported elsewhere.

This is our history. This is us. Our sins may be varied, but our conditions were all the same. We were forsaken by God and our land was desolate of anything life giving. And we earned it. We deserved it. We could really expect no better.

And what is Christ's ministry to us? What is the message of the purified church? It won't be that way any longer. Your bad reputation will not be remembered. Your desolate condition will improve. Your past will not be held against you. Get this. This is grace emboldened. Your future is that God will look at you and from the heart say **"My delight is in you"**. Doesn't that just smash down every wall of resistance that we put up to the will of God? Doesn't that reduce us to tears over **ever doubting** in the goodness of God? Doesn't it just melt our hearts. It should. The truth of this is beyond any human explanation.

In reality this is being spoken to His church. It is not to us individually. But it is to us corporately. And if we are part of His church we fully get the benefit. Wow. **Delight? Me?** Are you sure you aren't confused God? Me? How can that be? You know me? You know my failures. You know my rebellion. You know that I have not loved you as you deserve to be loved **a single day of my life**. How can you delight in me? And then we remember. Oh yes. Jesus. Wonderful wonderful Jesus. That is how God can delight in His church. We are wearing **His** robes. We are riding **His** coattails. And **His** beauty is sufficient for us all.

Our brother Ortland says "You're no longer defined by your past. I redefine you with a new name of my own choosing. I am rewriting your future, and



nothing can change it”

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

**5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.**

This is a similar imagery to drinking milk at the breasts of kings. It is an odd phrase, but the people would really remember it. Essentially the sons of this kingdom will marry the kingdom. It is like the offspring of the city will honor the city. That seems to be the intention.

But the second part is what is so easy to understand and so wonderful. Who marries a woman that they don't want? I am sure it has happened. But that is not usually the case. Normally a man is **enthralled** with his bride. I know I was. And to think that God will rejoice over me like I rejoiced over Carla is about more than I can imagine. And Christ knows me. When I got married I was young and idealistic. I had no idea how hard it would be to mesh two lives into one. I think the first three years were nothing but surprise after surprise. But God isn't idealistic. He says this and **He knows His church**. He **knows His bride**. And He still somehow rejoices over having us. Frankly I don't really get this. When I fish for trout I often catch chubs. And they are always a disappointment. I would think that we were the chubs in Christ's trout fishing. But He says that is not true. He is enthralled with His bride. Wow. How in the world can it get better than that? How?

**6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,**

**7 And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

These verses are very very odd.

This is a lesson on prayer. And what is it saying? Don't give God any rest. Does that strike you as funny? It does me. The prophet is telling us to **pester God**. Let our prayers for the benefit of the church **pester God**. Don't give Him any rest. Become a frequent flyer in the seats of prayer on God's plane. Keep **praying this** and **praying this** and **praying this**. God isn't moving yet? Pray more. Things are moving backwards? Pray more. Things are starting to get shaken up? Pray more.

Do you get tired of praying for stuff that God doesn't do? That's ok. Bug God and keep bugging God. Isn't that odd? But that is exactly what it says. God will not tire of you asking God to Glorify himself. He will never tire of that.

Pray that the church would prosper in glorifying God, even when it seems **it will never do such a thing**. God says it will one day.

And notice too. God has already set these kinds of people in place. And they are already doing it. God has set His watchmen and they are praying. Are we one of them? Are we praying for the glory of God? Are we living for the glory of God? Do we see this little gathering of people as a holy thing, separated for God's purposes to give Him glory and to represent Him to the world? Do we pray for God's glory in our world? Do we offer ourselves in His service to do whatever He wants done? Do we accept our circumstances as His will for our lives and face them faithfully?

That really is our assignment this week and every week? What is your chief end? **to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.**