

**Comfort for Our Crisis:
We Find Comfort in What God Will Do
Isaiah 49-66**

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Text Introduction: We return to the book of Isaiah this morning. With the exception of a few Sundays here and there for special emphases, we have been in the book of Isaiah in this latter part of the year. We are considering this book from the general theme of “Crisis,” because it is a prophetic message from a time of crisis in Isaiah’s day, focused on the nation of Israel and more precisely, Judah. To this point, we have examined the *Confrontation that Comes from Crisis*. That’s the tough part. But, that is only part of the story. We have also begun to see the comfort from God in the midst of the crisis.

Isaiah was the messenger of God during a part of ancient Israel’s history that was filled with crisis. Isaiah would prophesy the coming judgment of God on Israel (really Judah). But, as is so common in God’s Word, this message of God’s judgment was always tempered with the message of God’s grace. And the message of God’s grace to Israel through Isaiah is that though judgment is coming in the form of invasion of a foreign army and subsequent exile, there will be a return to the land of promise.

In sum, we can summarize this message of comfort with these broad ideas. We find our comfort in who God is, what God is doing, and today, we add to that, “What God will do.”

What is God going to do? Let me summarize that in broad, but comforting strokes today. It’s the compilation of the latter part of Isaiah’s preaching as compiled in Isaiah 49-66. For a taste of what that preaching sounded like, we will start by reading Isaiah 49:13-26.

Text: Shout for joy, you heavens!
Earth, rejoice!
Mountains break into joyful shouts!
For the LORD has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

¹⁴ Zion says, “The LORD has abandoned me;
the Lord has forgotten me!”

¹⁵ “Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or lack compassion for the child of her womb?
Even if these forget,
yet I will not forget you.

¹⁶ Look, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.

¹⁷ Your builders hurry;
those who destroy and devastate you will leave you.

¹⁸ Look up, and look around.
They all gather together; they come to you.

As I live” —
this is the LORD’s declaration—

“you will wear all your children as jewelry,
and put them on as a bride does.

¹⁹ For your waste and desolate places
and your land marked by ruins—
will now be indeed too small for the inhabitants,
and those who swallowed you up will be far away.

²⁰ Yet as you listen, the children
that you have been deprived of will say,
‘This place is too small for me;
make room for me so that I may settle.’

²¹ Then you will say within yourself,
‘Who fathered these for me?
I was deprived of my children and unable to conceive,
exiled and wandering—
but who brought them up?
See, I was left by myself—
but these, where did they come from?’”

²² This is what the Lord GOD says:
Look, I will lift up my hand to the nations,
and raise my banner to the peoples.
They will bring your sons in their arms,
and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.

²³ Kings will be your guardians
and their queens your nursing mothers.
They will bow down to you
with their faces to the ground
and lick the dust at your feet.
Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who put their hope in me
will not be put to shame.

²⁴ Can the prey be taken from a mighty man,
or the captives of a tyrant be delivered?

²⁵ For this is what the LORD says:
“Even the captives of a mighty man will be taken,
and the prey of a tyrant will be delivered;
I will contend with the one who contends with you,
and I will save your children.

²⁶ I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh,
and they will be drunk with their own blood
as with sweet wine.
Then all people will know
that I, the LORD, am your Savior,
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Introduction: Isaiah brings comfort to Judah in prophesying what God will do. These thoughts of what God will do begin in chapter 49 and continue through the remainder of the book. The emphasis is on

what God will do in restoring Israel. God first does this through Cyrus, king of Persia. Next, Isaiah brings the message that God will bring ultimate deliverance through a coming Messiah. God will ultimately bring about His plan for His creation in eternity. Though judgment is coming, the remnant of Israel can look forward to and take comfort in the hope of the return, look beyond even a return in a coming King, a Messiah, and because of that coming Messiah, a promised new Jerusalem for eternity. It's a foreshadowing of the Gospel in the Old Testament.

It's a message with an imminent prediction of God's mercy in a return from exile, God's future mercy in the birth of a Messiah, and God's ultimate mercy in eternity. We have very similar promises. We benefit from the first coming of Jesus, and we long for (with equal expectation) His second coming.

And, so we seek on that basis to make this message of what God promises to do real and relevant to whatever our current crisis might be. How do we do that?

We are comforted in that judgment is not God's ultimate desire.

The judgment of God is well deserved. We have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. As Isaiah would preach it in Isaiah 59:2, "Iniquities are separating you from God." We feel abandoned. We feel forgotten. But this is not God's ultimate desire. In fact, His compassion will not let us go. As a mother to a child, He cannot give up on us. And so, in His compassion, He will return the people of Israel to the land of Israel. But not only return them, He redeems and restores what they have forfeited. This is what God desired to do then, and it is what God desires to do now.

We are comforted that the powers of this world are not the ultimate authority.

Isaiah 60:12 uses this strong language, "For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you will perish, those nations will be annihilated."

Israel must have been bewildered at the news of how they would ever return when Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and others looked so powerful. We become disillusioned by today's powers—nations who seem powerful and evil which appears to reign unchecked. But, this is not final!

Kingdoms of this world come and go. Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Romans—all of these would reign between Isaiah's day and the coming of Messiah. But all lost their power. In more modern times, when I was a young boy, I could not have imagined the dismantling of the Soviet Union. They were evil. They controlled a large territory and they could not be defeated. But, my kids know nothing of the power of the Soviets.

Political rulers do not have ultimate authority. Evil does not have ultimate authority. Evil does not have the final say in our world.

We are comforted that here is not our ultimate home.

In the last words of Isaiah, Isaiah appears to change his focus from these historical times to a future eternal time.

Isaiah 66:22-23.

So, we ought to live now like Heaven is our home. Danny Mann read in our staff devotionals this week from Elisabeth Elliot's book Through Gates of Splendor. Elliott is the widow of missionary Jim Elliott—missionary to Ecuador in the 1950's. Jim and four others including their pilot Nate Saint were killed by those they were trying to reach with the Gospel. Elisabeth Elliot, in the book, tells of the spiritual illustration that Nate Saint used about ridding the plane of anything unnecessary so as to bring more supplies like food and water that they could give away to the village they were trying to reach. He equated that to even a greater spiritual truth:

“When life's final flight is over, and we unload our cargo at the other end, the fellow who got rid of unnecessary weight will have the most valuable cargo to present to the Lord.” (*Through the Gates of Splendor*, p. 52.)

What does all of this mean?

God has the last word!

So What?

- **Trust His Word.**

Isaiah needed what we need so often. He needed a little bit of a pep talk. That's how I read the beginning of chapter 49. There are two great words about God's Word here as we come to the end of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:8—The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever.

Isaiah 55:11—So My word that comes from My mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.

Henry Blackaby reminds us to never make judgments about God and our faith in the middle of our circumstances. We will always get a distorted view of God that way. Never assume your perspective is the right one. Trust God's perspective instead of your own because your pain is not the end of your story. Trust God with the rest of your story! As someone said, “The worst thing is never the last thing.” (Copied)

- **Turn away from Sin and to the Savior.**

Consider especially Isaiah 55. (Verses 1-3, 6-7)

- **Tell this Good News.**

Isaiah 61.

Remember, God has the last word. And in the book of Hebrews, we learn what that last word is. The last word is Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-3—

Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. ²In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.