



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 58 | April 22, 2018

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I. Introduction to this Study

We continue our series inspired by The Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, *next door* as it is in heaven." In this study, we will examine the importance of true worship, which also happens *outside* the sanctuary!

II. Connecting with One Another

Think of someone through whom God brought healing and wholeness into your life. Who were they? How did they do so?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Isaiah 58.1-3.

Here God summons the prophet to speak on his behalf. What is the message God wants delivered? How does he want it delivered?

b. Do you get the sense that God's people are eager to receive this message? Why or why not? (see verse 2)

When have you received a message from God that you didn't want to hear? How did you respond?

c. In verse 3, the people wonder why God has not seen their fasting or noticed their humility. Of course, God is always with us, and sees everything we do.

Why, then, do you think they *feel*/ignored by God?

d. Reread verses 1-3, then continue onto 4-5.

The only required fast was once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 23.26-32). Since God knew his people could never keep the law perfectly, on this day the high priest would enter the sanctuary and offer a blood sacrifice, graciously atoning for the sins of the people. By abstaining from food on this day, they showed humility in receiving God's grace.

Why, then, is God displeased by these "extra" fasts his people are undertaking?

e. One author concludes, "The prophet, or God through the prophet, exposes the shallowness of this worship which the people take to be sufficient. In their fasting the people have no interest in what God really wants of them, not have they any interest in the needs of their fellow men."

This could be true of Christians today, too. How does it convict you? What does God want of you? What interest should you take in your neighbors?

- f. Read Isaiah 58.6-9a (stopping after the first half of verse 9).

Where do you see injustice, oppression, hunger, and poverty in your neighborhood? Where do you see it in the wider world?

- g. Tim Keller connects these issues of justice with grace: "People changed by grace should go... on a permanent fast. Self-indulgence and materialism should be given up and replaced by a sacrificial lifestyle of giving to those in need... What is this permanent fasting? It is to work against injustice, to share food, clothing, and home with the hungry and the homeless. That is the real proof that you believe your sins have been atoned for..."

What would you have to fast from to work more for justice, healing and wholeness in the world?

- h. Read Isaiah 58.9b-12.

The Message translation of verse 12 is "You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again."

Who do you know that has embodied this healing spirit, like a light in the darkness?

What gifts has God given you to fix, restore, rebuild and renovate? (every Christian has at least one – see 1st Corinthians 12.7)

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to give you eyes to truly see those around you who are in need, whether they be physical, emotional, or spiritual needs,
- b. Pray for wisdom in how best you can use your spiritual gift(s) in restoring, rebuilding and renovating in your neighborhood,
- c. Lift up the ministry of all Christian churches, that we would be focused on true worship, as revealed in Isaiah 58.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Isaiah 58 has been compared to Isaiah 1.10-20, Amos 5.21-24, Micah 6.1-8 and Jesus' parable in Matthew 25.31-46. What similarities do you see?
- b. The Book of Hebrews engages the Day of Atonement in describing Jesus' sacrifice once, for all. See 7.23-28, 9.11-28, and 10.1-10.
- c. Read Deuteronomy 10.16-19. Commenting on these verses, Tim Keller writes, "The Israelites had been poor, racial outsiders in Egypt. How then, Moses asks, could they be callous to the poor, racial outsiders in their own midst?... The logic is clear. If a person has grasped the meaning of God's grace in his heart, he will do justice. If he doesn't live justly, then he may say with his lips that he is grateful for God's grace, but in his heart he is far from him. If he doesn't care about the poor, it reveals that at best he doesn't understand the grace he has experienced, and at worst he has not really encountered the saving mercy of God."