

FOR THINE IS THE
Kingdom AND THE
Power AND THE
Glory

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Isaiah 58 | November 4, 2018

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our exploration of how Christian faith influences our political activity. As we have seen thus far in Genesis 11 and 1st Samuel 8, Scripture has a lot to say about our civic life. This week we explore our call to “defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.” (Psalm 82.3)

II. Connecting with One Another

We hear a lot of messages during the political cycle. Where do you hear such messages? What messages do you hear?

III. Study the Text

a. **Read Isaiah 58.1-3**

In these first few verses God summons the prophet to speak for Him. What is God’s message? How is the prophet to deliver it?

Are God’s people interested in hearing from Him? Have you ever received a message you didn’t want to hear from God? From a friend? From a family member? How did you respond?

b. What do you make of the people’s questions in verse 3? Has God *really* not noticed? If He has, why do they feel that way?

c. **Read Isaiah 58.4-5**

God’s people were required to fast just once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This was prescribed in Leviticus 23.26-27 : The Lord said to Moses, “The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present a food offering to the Lord.” On this day, the high priest would enter the sanctuary and offer a blood sacrifice, atoning for the sins of the people (since we could never keep God’s law perfectly).

Why do you think God instructs his people to abstain from food during this occasion?

If fasting was instructed once a year, why could God be displeased by their “extra” fasts?

d. Verse 5 originally referred to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Could it, however, be read in light of election day!? Why or why not?

- e. One author writes, "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."

How does this convict you? What interest do you have in the needs of other people?

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

What injustice, oppression, hunger, and poverty do you see in our community? In our country? In our world?

Both sides of the political aisle take action on these issues, though perhaps in different ways. What is God's instruction in these verses? Where could you join in God's call to "loose the chains of injustice, untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke"?

- g. **Read Isaiah 58.9b-14**

How do you understand these verses? What phrases stick out to you?

- h. Tim Keller writes, "The person who knows that he received mercy while an undeserving enemy of God will have a heart of love for even (and especially!) the most ungrateful and difficult persons. When a Christian sees prostitutes, alcoholics, prisoners, drug addicts, unwed mothers, the homeless, the refugees, he knows that he is looking in a mirror. Perhaps the Christian spent all of his life as a respectable middle-class person. No matter. He thinks: 'Spiritually I was just like these people, though physically and socially I never was where they are now. They are outcasts. I was an outcast.'"

What do you make of this connection between our receiving mercy with showing it to others?

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 join God's restorative work in the world,
- c. Lift up the ministry of Good Shepherd and all other Christian churches, that we would be focused on true worship, as revealed in Isaiah 58.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Time permitting, reflect on similar passages in **Isaiah 1.10-20, Amos 5.21-24, Micah 6.1-8, and Matthew 25.31-46.**

