

I. Introduction

- A. Today we begin a study of Isaiah (*first time I've preached through this book*)
1. Sorry. Isaiah is important book; quoted most in the NT (*except Psalms*)
 - a. It is one of the longest OT books (*not like there's not enough material*)
 - b. It is the first book in the Bible to use the word "gospel" (in Greek LXX)
 2. No OT book speaks more about the coming Christ ("*Messianic Prophet*")
 - a. Jesus read from **Isaiah 61** in his sermon at Nazareth (**Luke 4:21**)
 - b. Philip began with **Isaiah 53** to preach Jesus to Eunuch (**Acts 8:35**)
 3. It is hard to overstress the importance of Isaiah in the OT (Barry Webb)
In terms of theological significance, the book of Isaiah is the 'Romans' of the Old Testament. It is here that the threads come together and the big picture of God's purposes for his people and for his world is most clearly set forth.
- B. Our reading will introduce somethings about the book (**Read: Isaiah 1:1-3**)
1. **First**, Isaiah's book is a "vision" through which "*the Lord has spoken*"
 - a. Isaiah will often preface his message with "*Hear the word of the Lord*"
 - b. Book is largely poetic oracles (sermons) directed at Judah in South
 - 1) These aren't in chronological order (*his call is not until chapter 6*)
 - 2) There is a large section in the middle that is historical prose
 2. **Second**, these sermons span 40+ years, from Uzziah to Hezekiah
 - a. His ministry spans two great world powers—Assyria and Babylon
 - b. But he is always looking past the immediate present to coming future
 - 1) During Assyria's ascendancy, he warns of the fall to Babylon
 - 2) During the rise of Babylon, he looks to the coming Messianic king
 3. **Third**, Isaiah is telling God's people that they must act as God's people
 - a. He begins by saying that Judah is as dumb and dumber than an ox
 - 1) Animals know their owner; they don't bite the hand that feeds them
 - 2) God's people have turned against God... and they must change
 - b. Isaiah begins in chapter 1 by point out a basic flaw in Judah's thinking
 - 1) The thing we will see about this old book—it holds up pretty well
 - 2) Many things Isaiah pointed to then need to be pointed out now

II. Right Before Rite: The Text (Isaiah 1:10-20)

- A. Here's how Isaiah begins his first "Hear the word of the Lord" (**Isa 1:10**)
1. When preacher begins by comparing you to Sodom... not a good sign
 - a. It was only grace that spared Judah a similar fate than Sodom (**Isa 1:9**)
 - b. Sodom? We know the sin of Sodom, don't we? *A bunch of Sodomites*
 - c. I don't think that word means what you think it means (**Ezek 16:49**)
 - 1) The sin of Sodom was arrogance and not caring about the poor
 - 2) File that factoid away and see if that doesn't come up a bit later
 2. Before we see what Isaiah says of Judah's sin, notice what it isn't (**1:11-12**)
 - a. Israel's basic problem had nothing to do with how they did church
 - 1) They were offering the right sacrifices and keeping the right feasts
 - 2) It wasn't like they skipped church—they trampled God's courts
 - b. Isaiah will say is that there's a disconnect between worship and life
 - c. Judah thought that right worship could make up for a wrong life
- B. Can we do that? Can we act like God is most interested in "churchy stuff?"
1. God can easily forgive or even overlook flaws in our character and life
 - a. Blow your stack? Hold a grudge? Be a bit envious? Or too ambitious?
 - b. Well, nobody is perfect, right? God doesn't take that stuff too seriously
 - c. Well, those are all works of the flesh ("not inherit the kingdom of God")
 2. Some think God easily forgives those things... if we can get church right
 - a. Use a piano? Wrong on rapture? Bit too charismatic? Women teach?
 - b. Remember the worship question woman at the well asks? (**John 4:19**)
 - 1) Why bring that up? Jesus just pointed to her lifestyle (**John 4:18**)
 - 2) Her focus on right worship was diversion from her imperfect life
 - c. I wonder if our worship can at times be the same kind of smokescreen
 3. I don't do "counseling." I talk to people, but don't counsel (*can't be sued!*)
 - a. Partly because I'm not good at it (*good counselor has to be suspicious*)
 - 1) Also because I can be like aspirin; people talk to me and feel better
 - 2) But they never do the hard work in counseling to really get better
 - b. *Can our worship do that?* Make us feel better without facing real issue?

- C. Isaiah isn't about making us feel better; he gets to the real issue (**Isa 1:13-15**)
1. God wasn't listening to their worship because it didn't match their lives
 - a. Their hands were full of blood; their lives didn't match their worship
 - b. Paul said worship at Corinth did more harm than good? (**1 Cor 11:17**)
 - 1) Communion is community/unity; they were divided and alienated
 - 2) Their worship did more harm than good; it didn't match their life
 2. If our worship does not come out of our lives, then it isn't really worship
 - a. Our worship to God must be a reflection of our daily lives with God
 - b. It's not enough to lift your hands in prayer— they must be holy hands
 3. In *The Godfather*, Michael Corleone stands as godfather at christening
 - a. He orders the assassinations of rival mob bosses at the same time
 - 1) The camera shifts back and forth between church and murders
 - 2) Reverent ritual of church is interspersed with gunfire and blood
 - b. You can't worship God with bloody hands—Godfather's or ours
- D. Isaiah tells us how their praying hands were covered in blood (**Isa 1:16-17**)
1. You can't worship God without caring about what God cared about
 - a. They needed to do right; they needed to care about the oppressed
 - b. It sounds a lot like Isaiah is connecting our worship to social justice
 2. God has always demanded that His people care about poor & powerless
 - a. The Exodus itself flowed out of God's concern for oppressed people
 - b. They were to care for the powerless—they'd been slaves (**Dt 24:17-18**)
 - c. Do we have less responsibility because we're under the cross, not Law?
 - 1) What did Jesus see as difference in sheep and goats? (**Matt 25:36**)
 - 2) What does James call pure and undefiled religion? (**James 1:27**)
 3. Focus on right rites of worship doesn't matter if we're living wrong, right?
 - a. We can't cover wrong-headed lives with a façade of right religion
 - 1) That didn't work for the Godfather and it won't work for us
 - 2) Perfectly pious Sunday doesn't cover-over a rowdy Saturday night
 - b. Our worship must flow out of a life that is directed toward God
 - c. That doesn't mean perfect or even close, but it does mean consistent

III. Right Before Rite: Does Life Match Our Worship

- A. **First**, how often do you think about Christ and his cross during week
1. Communion stands at the center of our worship—focus on the cross
 2. Jesus told us that we are to pick up the cross daily (**Luke 9:23**)
 - a. What if the only time you think of the cross is on Sunday?
 - b. What if you never deny yourself anything because of the cross?
- B. **Second**, how well do you live out daily the songs you sing on Sunday
1. Our songs represent a reminder of how we are committing to live
*Lord, I give You my heart; I give You my soul. I live for You alone.
Every breath that I take; every moment I'm awake. Lord have your way in me*
 - a. We may not let God to have his way “*every moment I'm awake*”
 - b. But we are committing ourselves to the pursuit this life goal
 2. What if you can't recognize daily life in at all in any of the songs?
 - a. What if you never think of these songs until next Sunday?
 - b. That might suggest your life and your worship don't match
- C. **Third**, is what you give a true reflection of how you've prospered
1. The way we see things often depends on their context in life, right
 - a. Two minutes is short for a coffee break but long if holding breath!
 - b. \$100 bill is not much for rent, but might seem a lot to put in plate
 2. Jesus says that our treasure shows where our heart really is (**Matt 6:21**)
 - a. What if we spend freely on ourselves but are stingy toward God?
 - b. What if we're so much in debt ourselves we have nothing for others?

IV. Conclusion

- A. What if life doesn't match worship? Change one or other (**Isa 1:18-20**)
1. Earlier he says they should stop worship: God calls burden
 2. Here he gives them the option to change; there is a play on words
 - a. They can repent and change and eat from the goodness of God
 - b. They can refuse and be eaten up by His judgement. Same choice.
- B. But we have the choice; when can change our lives to match our worship
1. We can have our sin washed away until we are white as snow.
 2. What can wash away our sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus