

## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

JESUS IS: STILL RELEASING PEOPLE FROM POVERTY

ISAIAH 58:6-14

MARCH 1, 2020



### SERMON OUTLINE

1. Christian living Includes \_\_\_\_\_ the Poor \_\_\_\_\_.

Luke 4:18-19

2. Jesus made a Promise \_\_\_\_\_ that He has Invited \_\_\_\_\_  
us to help Him Keep \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 6:25-34, 25:34-40

3. There is a Reward \_\_\_\_\_, but it might not be what you Expect \_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 19:17

4. If you want to Feel \_\_\_\_\_ something, Do \_\_\_\_\_ something.

Matthew 6:21

**Jesus fills Their \_\_\_\_\_ empty stomachs and Our \_\_\_\_\_ empty hearts.**

What will I do on Monday with what I have learned on Sunday?

### MAIN POINT

Worship and obedience to God should always be concerned with freeing the oppressed and burdened. In turn, God will bless His people for their others centered faith.

### THINKING THINGS THROUGH

*Connect the sermon to the study.*

## SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

**1. When is a time when you feel like you have truly worshipped God? How do you measure the sincerity of your worship?**

**2. What is the difference between worshipping God out of duty and worshipping God in joyful sincerity?**

**Leader:** True worship is not about actions, but about the heart. Our pretense may fool others, but it cannot fool God. Isaiah chapter 58 begins with God diagnosing a problem in His people. They worshipped Him, but they only worshipped Him to be seen. They hoped that if God saw their worship, He would respond (58:3). However, God is not primarily concerned with actions in worship, but with the heart behind worship. God responded that if they were truly worshipping, their love for Him would be evident in their care for the poor and oppressed. If they pursued justice for all people, God would respond by blessing their others focused service.

### DIGGING DEEPER

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 58:6-7.

**3. Isaiah 58:6 begins with a corrective critique from God on the worship of His people. Glance back through verse 1-5. What issue did God find with His people's worship?**

**4. Prophets often used poetic language and phrases to communicate ideas. Who did God seem to be concerned about in verses 6-7? In the passage, what language or phrases help you identify God's concern?**

**Leader:** Words and phrases like "yoke," "chains," "poor," "hungry," and "naked" all signal God's concern for the poor. The Israelites needed to remove the yoke under which many people labored like animals to serve the selfish wants of others. The people needed to set the oppressed free so those broken and dispirited by the difficulties of life might find a new start. God desired His people to follow Him and care for others as He did.

**5. What is the connection between worship of God and care for the poor and oppressed?**

**6. Is your life marked by care for the people that God cares about? How can we make sure we care about those God cares about? What specific actions can you take?**

**Leader:** God consistently gives grace and love to people who can never repay Him. We are called to imitate God. God listed specific actions Israel could take. The people could ensure the hungry had adequate food, the homeless had adequate shelter, and the poorly clothed had adequate clothes. Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and the Goats offered a similar list and challenges believers to put their faith into action (Matt. 25:31-46).

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 6:8-14.

**7. What hope and promise did God offer for His people who followed Him in His charge to help the least of these?**

**8. What tangible benefits would they experience as they followed God? What benefits have you experienced following God and doing as He commands?**

**9. Isaiah 58 makes it clear that true hope and security come from following God and being attentive to His plans. Where are you tempted to look for hope and security instead?**

**Leader:** Once the Israelites returned to God in all sincerity and commitment, they would find a fulfilling life regardless of the political fortunes of their nation. God's leadership, sustaining power, and strength would enable His people to be a constant source of hope and encouragement to others and a continual force for justice and righteousness. We cannot look to anyone or any thing other than God to ensure our fortunes. Our sinful hearts make looking elsewhere our default, but through grace we can overcome the breakdown in our hearts (see Matt. 6:25-34).

**10. What rewards did God promise for giving to the poor in verses 9 and 14? How have you experienced the fulfillment of these promises in your own life?**

**Leader:** As the people responded in obedient worship, God promised that He would hear them and that they would have joy. Often, we are tempted to believe that joy is found by looking inward and taking rather than giving. Yet, God has said that true joy is

## SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

found as we pour ourselves out in worship of Him. One of the primary ways we do this is by caring for the poor and exhibiting the same grace toward others that God has shown to us.

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**11. Where are some specific areas we can pursue justice and mercy (see Micah 6:8) in our community and world?**

**12. How might pursuing justice for the oppressed open up doors for gospel conversations? How can we be prepared to step into these opportunities as they arise?**

### PRAYER

Thank God for the purpose of worship. Ask that beyond our physical fasting that we would fast from the systems and oppression of this world and seek to overcome them by pursuing just and moral lives. Thank God for making His expectations clear to us in Scripture and giving us His Spirit so that we can obey.

### MEMORIZE

<sup>6</sup> “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

— Isaiah 58:6-7

### SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

ISAIAH 58:6-14

58:6-7. If ritual fasting was simply boosting one’s own religious ego, what was the key to divine blessing? What was acceptable to the Lord? God called for concrete action, helping others in need. Again the emphasis is on overcoming injustice with righteous acts. God does not want anyone under someone else’s yoke. Here is the beginning of the fight against slavery of every

## SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

kind. God hates oppression. He wants his people to set oppressed people free. God's people are dedicated to providing the basic needs of life to those who do not own them. We feed the hungry and provide shelter for the poor, homeless wanderer. We clothe those who cannot afford proper clothing, and we make sure we take care of our own flesh and blood.

God does not accept excuses from people who try to hide themselves and pretend needy family members do not exist (see Deut. 22:1-4). Note that you here through verse 14 is singular, pointing to individual blessings and responsibilities. The singular "you" is directed at each member of the people of God, so that the collective group becomes what each individual becomes.

58:8-10. When God's people learn that salvation for them means giving themselves to establish righteousness and justice for others, then God's promise and purposes will be fulfilled. The "light to the nations" (49:6) will dawn. Healing for the nations and the needy will take place. The image here is of the quick appearance of a scab over a wound in the skin. God's righteousness revealed in our righteous acts will lead the parade that will bring in the Gentiles. God's glory (cp. ch. 6) will be the rear guard protecting the caravan (cp. 52:12). No longer are we talking of a march out of exile through the wilderness to Jerusalem as in chapters 40-55. Now we are talking of Israel taking up their mission for God and leading the parade to call the world to join in worship in Jerusalem.

Under these conditions, the faithful believer could call upon God and expect an answer (contrast v. 3). Just as the prophet had answered God's call to service with Here am I (6:8), so God will answer his obedient servants. God is present for his people only when his people are present for others. Such presence for others involves one's words and deeds. Pointing a finger of accusation and blame at another or gossiping maliciously about another is as wrong and sinful as refusing to provide for the needs of the oppressed. Then the light of God's salvation will break in like noonday for you, for the poor, and for the nations.

58:11-14. Creating righteousness for the poor and oppressed brings God's listening ear to Israel's prayers (v. 9) and God's guiding hand to guide them and to satisfy their needs. This would have national implications, since the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the nation could then continue. The disappointment of the returned exiles at the weakness and desolation of Jerusalem would end as God led an obedient people to fulfill their dreams as well as his. The good old days would return if proper respect for God and his worship ruled the day.

The prophetic lesson was complete. Prophetic religion had been defined. It was a combination of proper conduct in relationship to the world's needy and proper respect for the worship observances which God had set forth. True religion expressed in doing justice and righteousness would result in a new day for Jerusalem and new joy for God's people.