Sermon Notes for August 28, 2016

The God Who Hears

Isaiah 58

Introduction

In chapter 58, Isaiah confronts a people who were doing the right thing for the wrong reason. They were religious, but it was all about them.

They wondered why God didn’t hear their prayers.

This is what God said.

I. Religious rituals are no substitute for genuine faith. Isaiah 58:1-5

Who were these rebels?

- They prayed daily.
- They seemed eager to know God.
- They even fasted and prayed.

But there was something seriously wrong here. They were blind to their sin.

The problem was their fasting was all about them. They were trying to manipulate God for personal gain.

Isaiah 59:1-8 makes it very clear that the reason God did not hear their prayers was because of their sin.

“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.” Isaiah 59:1-2

What God is looking for is the evidence of a changed life.

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are full committed to him.” II Chronicles 16:9

II. God is looking for changed lives. Isaiah 58:6-14

True fasting is marked by genuine repentance and sacrificial service.

Isaiah gives three examples:

A. Feed the hungry. Verses 6-7

Don’t be indifferent. Don’t say it’s not my problem.
Look at what God says when we live this way. (Verses 8-9a) Light, healing, righteousness and joy will come into our life and God will hear our prayers and be with us.

B. Correct injustice. Verses 9b-10a

God is calling us to be salt and light in our world.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James 1:27

This present world will never be perfect, but we are called to make it a better place by fighting against the sin and suffering and injustice in our world.

We do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

When we live this way, God says he will strengthen us, guide us and provide for us. Verses 10b-12

C. Delight in the Lord. Verses 13-14

The Sabbath was intended to be a day of rest and worship.

It is not another day off to just do as you please.

Sunday is the Lord’s Day.

God wants us to be joyful in our worship and service.

- He wants us to worship him with gladness. Psalm 100:2
- He loves hilarious givers. II Corinthians 9:7
- Jesus came to give us fullness of joy. John 15:11
- When we delight in the Lord, he gives us the desires of our heart. Psalm 37:4

Delight in God is transforming.

Look at what God says he will do for those who live this way. Verse 14. He gives joy and blessing.

Conclusion

God is not impressed by religious rituals.

God delights when his people are so changed by the gospel that they:

- Give of themselves in sacrificial service.
- Work to correct injustice.
- Find their greatest joy in him.