

Remember Your Name: Isaiah 58
by Tami Jelinek

While this passage may be set in history to speak of a return from a physical captivity and a physical rebuilding, we see language referring to spiritual restoration, which is in Christ. That is how we read it also (and *preeminently*) as prophetic and descriptive of the New Covenant, and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.

God is saying to Israel (Old Covenant Israel here) that they need to be shown a transgression of which they are not aware, *even though* in their minds, they seek God, and are obeying the ordinances (the law) and desire to know Him.

Isaiah 58:3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?'

They are asking why God hasn't noticed that they have kept the fast to the letter. Why is He telling Isaiah to show them their transgression? They don't think they have any. They are saying, "You mean we've done all this for nothing? We have kept all these laws and you don't even notice?" This is His reply:

"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers."

Now He is exposing their hearts:

Isaiah 58:4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. 5 Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord?

In the context of a "fast" under the guise of taking "delight in approaching God," He exposes their true motives, which are both self-serving and designed to inflict harm on others. He also points out the dishonesty represented by their display of outward trappings of supposed humility before Him. Contrary to what vainglorious religiosity imposes, it is not God's purpose to make His people miserable. He is rhetorically asking them in this passage, "Is this what you think I want from you?"

Now to the contrast, a different kind of "fast," the one He has chosen (and something to consider is the possibility of the contrast between the two fasts being paralleled with the contrast between the Old and New Covenants):

Isaiah 58:6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And

that you break every yoke?

The bonds of wickedness (the bondage of sin): God wants us free from bondage and free from the heavy burdens of guilt imposed by the law which condemns:

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Isaiah 58:7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Now this part is expounding upon how God's people treat one another. Nakedness is associated in Scripture with shame. We are to cover each other's shame:

I Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Isaiah 58:8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

What makes us a light? What does the world see when they look at Christians? Jesus said all men would know we are His disciples by our love for one another. Showing mercy and love to each other: that is what will shine "like the morning" (out of the dark). It says "then", as in *when* you show mercy to each other, when you cover your brother's nakedness, *then* your light will shine. The reference to "healing" here is evocative of Isaiah 34: "The inhabitant shall not say, 'I am sick,' because they are forgiven." That is what it means to be "well" in the Kingdom of God. The glory of the Lord is synonymous with the salvation of the Lord. It is our rear guard: It protects us from attacks on our conscience, from others who would point the finger of condemnation, because as we will see, that is the emphasis of this entire passage.

Isaiah 58:9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

The yoke is the bondage of the law, and the pointing of the finger is using that to condemn each other. "Speaking wickedness" and also recalling from verse 4, "striking with the fist of wickedness": This "wickedness" is referring to how we *spea*k of each other when we are not being merciful. These spoken accusations are characterized by a striking fist, and are contrasted by what follows:

Isaiah 58:10 If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday.

Instead of the condemnation described in verse 9, we are called to minister healing and restoration to each other, and again, that will be the light that shines, by which "all men will know."

Isaiah 58:11 The Lord will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

All the springs of living water metaphors come to mind, and the tree planted by rivers of water, bearing fruit (Psalm 1). This is about the New Covenant and the church; it is about *us*.

Now watch this:

Isaiah 58:12 Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

"Those from among you": *We* are from among *New Covenant* Israel. We are the restorers. The repairers. He has restored us; now we, *in Him*, continually restore each other. We live out our restoration by *being* restorers. Sadly, much of the church today is judgmental and condemnatory; it effectually opposes restoration.

Isaiah 58:13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words,

This should bring to mind what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. We must remember how they had so distorted it. They turned it into a burden which they not only imposed on themselves, but on others. They used it for condemnation. But here it is said to be a delight:

Isaiah 58:14 Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

This is speaking of *the* Sabbath, Jesus Christ. He is our rest. He is the land in which we dwell peacefully. We are able to understand this because of the word "heritage." The New Testament elucidates the everlasting inheritance and specifies to whom it belongs.

The "high hills" picture our elevated position in Christ, having been restored and purified in conscience. No longer having cause to hang our heads in shame, we look up:

Psalm 3:3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter of my head.

Ephesians 2:6 ...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Here it is once again: Glory is seen to be synonymous with salvation, and salvation is

synonymous with forgiveness, a restored conscience, and the presence of God. In the land we are restored, brought back, redeemed. From the Scriptures it is evident that forgiveness is equated with heaven. In heaven we show that to each other. Perhaps the reason some Christians don't recognize they are in heaven is that they are not restoring one another.

Remember your name:

"You shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In."