

2 The Promise¹
Isaiah 59:20
ABC 12/8/19

Last week we looked at the Christmas story as found in Noah & the ark focusing on what mankind's problem is. What is it? Sin. Without an understanding of sin & our guilt we can't understand or embrace God's grace. It's unintelligible unless you 1st understand you need it. & it's the doctrine of sin which accurately & adequately explains to us what our need is. If we don't know why it is that Jesus had to come, we can't appreciate what He's accomplished in His coming; nor can we appreciate the predicament we're in, the problem we have, without Him. In Isaiah 59 we read the same thing. **7-8**

How can a corrupt, evil, wicked person have a relationship with the holy, righteous God of creation? The solution can only come from God & we find the answer comes because of His grace. Just as Noah was given God's grace & the blueprint for the ark to save him from the flood to come, God still gives grace allowing us to have faith in God & His plan of salvation. We're going to end up in Isaiah 59 this morning, but it'll take us a bit to get there. Our problem is sin, our selfishness & rebellion against our Creator who made us to love Him. We are fallen, broken, wicked, evil, corrupt, degenerate, sinful people. What hope do we have? Only Jesus. PRAY

God started making promises of a solution to our sin problem the same time sin 1st entered this world. The good news comes at the same time the curse comes. God doesn't wait days, weeks, or years. He embeds within the curse the gospel, because God is by nature a Redeemer & He's gracious & merciful & marked by lovingkindness. Before God even banishes Adam & Eve from Paradise, & before punishment is placed on them, hope is placed in their hearts. **Gen 3:15**

Here God promised there would be a seed of a woman who would crush the serpent's head while Himself being wounded in the heel. God promises a coming Rescuer, Savior, Messiah, One who'd be wounded while totally defeating & destroying Satan.² When Eve gave birth to Abel they thought he might be the promised Messiah (Gen 4:1). Maybe he'd be the one who'd crush Satan's head. But Abel was murdered. Maybe it would be Cain. No, he killed Abel & was cursed

¹ Advent series adapted from Paul David Tripp's Advent sermons from 2010

² See sermon preached 12/2/18 at ABC, titled *By Prophets Bard Foretold: Seed of the Woman*

by God (Gen 4:11) & was of **the evil one** (1 Jn 3:12). It had to be through another child & the OT tells us it was through Seth. The Messiah isn't going to come through Abel, he's dead. Nor through Cain. There's another son. **Gen 4:25**

Starting there we have the genealogies of Seth. It runs all through chpt 5. When we get to the end, we find a name that's familiar. **5:28-29**

The anointed One, the One who crushes the serpent's head will come through the line of Seth, & the genealogy traces the line of Seth down to Noah. We know the Messiah had to come through Noah because everybody else was drowned except Noah & his family. After the flood (Gen 9) we find the genealogies of Noah's 3 sons. Which one will carry God's promise forward? Vs 26 says, **Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem.** God chooses Shem & his descendants are then listed. God's promise goes through the line of Seth, Noah, Shem, & then **11:27a**.

Terah is the father of Abram who later became Abraham. Abraham is a descendant of Shem who lives in Ur of the Chaldeans (31), but who migrates to the land of Canaan (11:31). There God comes to him & gives him the promise that through him this descendant of Seth, descendant of Noah, descendant of Shem, through him, Abram, is going to come the promised seed, the promised salvation, the promised blessing. Abraham has 2 sons. Ishmael & Isaac. God chooses Isaac to move the line of promise forward. Isaac has 2 sons: Esau & Jacob. God chooses Jacob. Jacob has a bunch of sons. Which one does God choose? Gen 49:10 says, **The scepter, symbolizing the right to rule, shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes.** What's that mean? **Shiloh** is literally *until he comes to whom it belongs*. In other words, until the One whose right it is to rule has come. The Ruler will come through Judah & **to Him shall be the obedience of the nations.** Are you following this promise of God? The Messiah, the seed of the woman, will come through Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, & through him the obedience of the nations will come. & for all who are obedient, they'll experience the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham back in chpt 12. So we're looking now for someone in the tribe of Judah to carry God's promise forward. Interestingly, some rabbis taught Moses might be the Messiah. He was a prophet. He was meek. He was the redeemer of

Israel. He began life in Egypt. He was endangered by a hostile king. But it couldn't be Moses because in Dt 18:15 Moses prophesied that someone else would be the Messiah. But who in the line of Judah? From the time of Judah, hundreds of years pass; no Messiah, no Anointed One, no crushing of Satan's head. Then we meet a man by the name of Jesse who's a descendant of Judah & his youngest son is David. According to Isaiah 11, we read this, **1-10**.

Who's that talking about? The Messiah, who is a descendant of Jesse. Jesse had a number of sons but the descendant would come through David. In 2 Sam 7 we find an amazing promise given to David. **When your days are complete & you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you & I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, & I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (12-13)**. God says to David, *My promise will come through one of your descendants*. The line narrows to this son of Jesse, David. The Jews knew this. In fact, some rabbis called the Messiah, *Messiah ben David*, Messiah son of David. Remember when Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem in the triumphal entry, what did the people say? **Hosanna to Whom? The Son of David** (Mt 21:9). Micah 5 says He'll come from the town of Bethlehem, which was David's town. So all over the OT we're told God's promise is to defeat sin & provide salvation through the Messiah, who will be a descendant of David. & so the genealogy of Jesus begins in Mt 1, **The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah**, what's next? **The Son of David, the Son of Abraham**. This is the godly line that leads from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ruth, David, & eventually culminates in the person of Jesus Christ. But from David, 900 years pass with no Messiah. In that time some people thought Hezekiah was the Messiah. He was the good son of Ahaz. & then there was just a long line of false messiahs. *Theudas* boasted himself to be a savior, & he attracted about 400 people. He was killed & his followers scattered. *Judas of Galilee* arose, probably contesting the Roman registration for taxation. He gathered a large following, but he too perished & his followers were dispersed. *That Egyptian*, (no name given) led people to follow him to the wilderness. He was pursued but escaped, & then went into hiding & obscurity. *Simon of East Jordan* crowned himself king. He burned the royal house in Jericho & the homes of the rich, before dying in combat. *The wonder working Bedouin* was

another unnamed champion claiming to be messiah, promised the people liberty if they'd follow him to the desert, but he too was slain.³ Had God forgotten His promise? There were some rabbis who knew Daniel said it would be 483 years between the decree of Artaxerxes to the coming of Messiah (Dan 9). They did the calculations & were expecting the Messiah to come in the very time Jesus lived. But how would they know? How would they know if the Messiah actually came? How could they identify who it was? Turn to Isaiah chapter 7. How were they going to know who this promised Messiah is? Isaiah 7:13, **Listen now, O house of David, is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men that you will try the patience of my God as well? *You don't want to become impatient with God's purposes.*** Here's what you look for. **The Lord Himself will give you a sign. *You're going to know when the Messiah arrives.*** How will you know? **Therefore, a virgin will be with child & bear a son & she will call His name Immanuel, *God with us.*** Is that specific enough? Was there ever a virgin-born child? Here's the answer in **Mt 1:20-25**.

Who is this promised Savior? Only Jesus qualifies. He's fully human who is *God with us*, which means He's fully divine. Isaiah 9 adds this, **A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us. & the government will rest on His shoulders.** That means the rule of the universe. & **His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father. Prince of Peace, of the increase of His government & peace there will be no end on the throne of whom? of David (6-7).** The perfect accuracy of Scripture takes us right to Bethlehem. The OT has a number of names for the Messiah. Ps 2:6 says He is King. They knew the Messiah would be a king. That's why as Philip & Nathanael were talking, Nathanael says to Jesus, **You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel (Jn 1:49).** In Isaiah 7:14 it says He'll be **Immanuel**. In Mt 1:23 He's called **Immanuel**. Daniel 7:13-14 says the Messiah will be the **Son of Man**. He's referred to as the Son of **Man** from His own lips about 80x in the NT. Isaiah 42:1 calls Him the servant or slave of God. Paul calls Jesus the **bond-servant** or slave of God in Phil 2:7. In Numbers there's another title given to Messiah, **I see Him but not now, I behold Him but not near. A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel (24:17).** The Messiah will be a **star** & a **scepter**. He'll be a glorious, shining, ruling star.

³ www.scribd.com/document/22834995/Many-False-But-One-True-Messiah

Listen to Rev 22:16, **I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things. I am the root & the descendant of David, the bright & morning star.** Ezekiel 34:23-24 say the Messiah will be the Shepherd. What does Jesus call Himself in Jn 10? **I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep** (11). The OT uses another important term to describe the Messiah & it's the word **Redeemer**. We finally made it to Isaiah 59:20. Israel is in one of its darkest hours. They're spiraling down a path of destruction & hopelessness. But even in the darkest of times there's still hope. Their hope was found in the promise of a coming Savior, a Redeemer who was coming to redeem mankind from the power & penalty of sin. Back up to the 1st vs of this chpt.

59:1

God's people wondered why God didn't seem to rescue them from their trials. Don't we do the same? When life isn't working, when we're suffering in some way, when we're disappointed, when the comfort & ease that we so often enjoy is interrupted, it's tempting for us to bring God into the court of our judgment & question His faithfulness, goodness, wisdom, & love. It's tempting to say, *God, where are You? I thought You were near to me. I thought You answered my prayers. Where are You?* That's exactly what these people were doing. They wondered if perhaps God had lost His strength, if His hand had become shortened. Isaiah assures them this isn't the case. But this touches on one of the greatest problems in practical theology: How can there be a God of love & all power when there's human suffering? If we loved someone & had the power to end their suffering, wouldn't we do it? Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote best-selling book titled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. His whole point is to say God is all loving but not all powerful; that God is good, but not sovereign. His conclusion? When bad things happen to good people it's because events are out of God's control. Kushner advises his readers to *learn to love God & forgive him despite his limitations*.⁴ This certainly isn't the God of the Bible, because **the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save. Nor His ear so dull That it cannot hear.** Maybe the problem isn't that God lacks power. Perhaps He lacks knowledge of or interest in our problem. But this isn't the situation at all, as Isaiah reminds us. God isn't deaf, He can hear us just fine.

⁴ p.162

When we allow ourselves to begin questioning God's wisdom, goodness, & presence, we no longer go to Him for help. We don't go to someone for help who we've come to doubt. Even if it's subtle, accusing God this way is dangerous spiritually. To the degree you've convinced yourself that God is less than faithful to His promises, that God is less than loving & that He isn't as near as you thought He was, you'll quit running to Him. That's what's happening here. So what's the cause of our problem? 2

The problem isn't with God's power, knowledge, or interest. The problem is with our iniquities. Sin has separated us from God. The phrase **separation between** is only found here & in Gen 1:6. Just as the firmament separated the waters above from the waters below, preventing any commingling, so iniquity & sins prevent any fellowship between God & mankind. How easy it is for us to blame our problems on everything except our sinfulness. We even blame God before seeing the problem is with us. We'll deny who God is before seeing the problem is with us. Our problem is our own sin, not the inability of God to hear, or His lack of interest. I like to think my biggest problems in life are outside of me. They're problems of situations, circumstances, location, environment, or relationships. I like to think I'm one of the good guys. God says, *I'm not the problem. You're the problem.* The problem actually exists inside each of us. Think with me for a moment. There's no such thing as a bad marriage. We ask, *How did I get in this bad marriage?* That doesn't make sense. A bad marriage is bad because people in the marriage are doing bad things. At the bottom of a bad marriage, what do you find? Sinful people. What about a dangerous neighborhood? There's no such thing as a dangerous neighborhood. Neighborhoods never did anything bad. You've never been hurt by a neighborhood. Why are neighborhoods dangerous? Because there are people in the neighborhoods who do evil, violent, dangerous things. At the base of a bad neighborhood, what do you find? Sinful people. We're the problem. We've taken God's beautiful, glorious, wisely created institutions & we've made a mess of them. That means you can't find hope by running to a new location, because guess what you find there? Us. You can't run to a new situation, because guess what you find there? Us. You can't run to a new relationship, because guess what you find there. Us. You'll never find hope that way.

God's diagnosis is correct. The problem is there's something that lurks inside of us that's dark & dangerous, that kidnaps our thoughts, diverts our desires, distorts our words, & drives our behavior. Our problem is our **iniquities & sin**. **Iniquity** means *moral uncleanness* & **sin** is missing the mark, never getting it right. Because there is **iniquity & sin** inside of us, we make a mess of God's good creations. We can't blame situations, environment, circumstances, locations, or relationships. The blame lies within us. Isaiah continues & in vss 3-8 gives a detailed description of the sins of God's people. We already read vss 7-8, the vss Paul quotes this in Rom 3:15-17 to demonstrate that mankind is sinful through & through. Because of sin, darkness comes. **9-11** Descriptive, isn't it? Our problem is our sin.

1. What God Saw 15b-16a

The state of God's people was no mystery to God. They cried out stating how desperate their condition was but He knew it all along. Not only was the state of God's people bad; but no one among them took the lead in getting it right. Where was someone who'd lead the people in righteousness? He couldn't be found. Where was the intercessor? One couldn't be found. Nobody was championing the cause of God. & God looked down & saw their condition & saw that no human could help them. So what does God do? He rises up & is going to bring salvation with His own arm, with His own strength. It's like when Paul says in Ephesians, They **were dead in your trespasses & sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.** & it goes on to give the dark description of us before Christ. Then it says, **But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us** (2:1-5). In other words, God saw our condition dead, helpless, unable to help ourselves & God stepped in to bring salvation that we could never bring on our own. In the light of this disaster, lostness, rebellion, transgression, sin, & iniquity, look what God does next. He doesn't turn His back, He doesn't walk away & He doesn't say, *I've had it. I'm going to wipe you out.* Instead He says, *Now that you're at this moment where you utterly have no hope, I'm going to send you hope, but it won't be a situation, it won't be a human relationship & it won't be a location. It will be a Person, & His name is Jesus. Hope is going to come.* That's the Christmas story. The Christmas story is

hope coming. That's why the angels sang their glorious song. That's why the Magi came to worship. That's why the shepherds were blown away. Hope had invaded the earth in the person of the Lord Jesus. Hope had come. Hope that had been so long lost, hope that had been destroyed is now returning in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. What God Did 16b-19

God waited for a sinful Israelite to turn to Him. He waited & waited for someone to lead them back to Him or an intercessor to plead before Him. None arose so God did it Himself. Nothing can derail God's plan. God puts on His armor & goes out to destroy His enemies, protect His people, & glorify His name! The end result will be wonderful. In His ultimate victory, the glory of the Lord will be known & respected from east to west. God's enemies will never triumph over Him.

3. What God Gave 20

A Redeemer will come to Zion. The Redeemer is coming! That was the message of the OT & the message of the NT is that the Redeemer has come. When did the Redeemer come to Zion? He came first at Christmas. He's coming a 2nd time that's still in the future. The 1st time He came & stood on the Mt of Olives & rode a donkey into Jerusalem. When He comes the 2nd time His feet will stand on the Mt of Olives & it will break in 2 (Zech 14:4). God declares: **a Redeemer will come to Zion.** Redeemer is sometimes translated kinsman-redeemer which had a specifically defined role in Israel's family life. The kinsman-redeemer was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Lev 25:48), to be the avenger to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Num 35:19), to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Lev 25:25), & to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Dt 25:5-10). In these, we see that the kinsman-redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the person, the property, & the posterity of the family. Our Kinsman-Redeemer is no other than Jesus Christ. He is our near Kinsman because He added sinless humanity to His deity. He's the one who buys us out of slavery. Redemption is Jesus Christ paying a price we could never pay to deliver us from our bondage to sin through His death on the cross. Redemption has its roots in Exodus where we read of God liberating His people from their bondage as slaves in Egypt (6:6; 15:13). The picture of redemption became

clearer, more specific, & more profound when Jesus came to die on our behalf. His death ransomed us, purchasing us from the slave market of sin so that now we belong to Him (Rom 6:18, 22). When He died, we died too, which is what Rom 6 tells us: **Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (6:6-7).** He's the one who avenges wrongs done to us. He protects our inheritance, & blesses & guards our future. This promise of God here in Isaiah 59 could be reworded, *I will send My Messiah, the Redeemer for all humanity, Jesus of Nazareth!* This is the promise of Christmas. Our redemption is complete & certain. Peter writes, **Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible or perishable things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish & without spot (1 Pt 1:18-19).** God didn't purchase our freedom with the typical currency, but with the blood of His own Son. Jesus paid the full price to secure our ransom from slavery to sin & purchase our salvation. He paid the price of His own precious blood. Christ's redemption signals an eternal change in our relationship to Him. God did it, so it can't be undone. Jesus bought us with His life & we're under a new Master now, & our old master can't get us back. God paid the full price with the death of His Son. There's nothing in existence that can pay a higher price to buy us back. He bought us with His life. He redeemed us. We are His. He is our Lord. Who does the **Redeemer** come to? To those who turn away from transgression. **21**

The covenant God makes with His people promises an abiding Spirit & an enduring word. God accomplishes His purpose in people & through all creation through both the Spirit & the word. God knows our condition & becomes our Intercessor (59:16), our Warrior (17-19), our Redeemer (20), & our Covenanter (21). The writer of Hebs tells us, **since the children share in flesh & blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, & might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives (Heb 2:14-15).** Jesus redeemed us, He bought us with His blood, redeeming us from the slave market of sin.

As you look at the names or titles, King, Immanuel, Son of Man, Servant of God, Star, Shepherd, Redeemer, they're all identifying Jesus. So when we ask the question: What person fits the unique requirements to be the Messiah? The answer is, only One, Jesus Himself. God says, *I'm going to send My Son & He's going to live on your behalf the perfect life that you could never live. He's going to take your sin on Himself & die the death you should die.* Jesus came to die as the perfect Lamb, the sinless sacrifice, & His death satisfies sin's punishment. How do we know? He rose from the dead & conquered death so that He can give us eternal life. By His life, by His death & by His resurrection, His righteousness is now given to us. We now stand before a holy God as if we'd never sinned. No longer do we need to be afraid of God's wrath. Instead He wraps His arms of acceptance around us & invites us into intimate personal relationship with Him. No longer does our sin separate us from Him. That's redemption. Sadly, Jn 1 says, **He was in the world, & the world was made through Him, & the world did not know Him. He came to His own, & those who were His own did not receive Him** (10-11). That's why the religious scribes, Pharisees, rabbis, & priests who studied the OT screamed to execute their Messiah. Isn't it the ultimate tragedy that the world still doesn't know Him? A simple, diligent look at Scripture points unmistakably to Him as the one & only Redeemer.

The 1st Christmas God chose to subject Himself to the human condition, being carried in the womb of a virgin woman, born into an oppressed people group under the rule of a foreign power that was probably the most brutal, corrupt & decadent government in human history, to be the perfect Redeemer & Savior of all. His name is Jesus. On Good Friday Jesus chose to give His life. He was publicly humiliated, shamed, tortured, executed, & died. On the 1st Easter He rose from the dead & a few weeks later ascended into heaven, having paid the cost, defeated death & disarmed the powers of evil. Today we celebrate the perfect Redeemer did come, paid the cost, & bought us out of our slavery to sin. When God wanted to save the world, He didn't send a committee; He sent His Son. When God wanted to say, *I love you*, He wrapped His love note in swaddling clothes. When God wanted to crush Satan, He started in a stable in Bethlehem. This Advent as we look out on a dark & uncertain world, our hope isn't in the sentiment of the holiday

season. Nor is our confidence in our own abilities. Much less do we find our hope in politicians or earthly power. Our confidence & hope lies in the Baby of Bethlehem, born of a woman, & He has crushed the serpent's head. He is the Redeemer! As we face life it's not in despair but with bright hope that even in the darkest moments the Lord Jesus, the Light of the world, shines brightly in the darkness of the blackest night. Our Redeemer is our only hope. It's not in ourselves & not in one another. Our hope is in Christ alone & that's the message of our text, it's the message of Christmas.

Perhaps today you find yourself in a desperate situation. You feel like you're surrounded by darkness & have no hope. God's Word tells us there is hope, His name is Jesus. He is the promised Kinsman-Redeemer, Messiah, & Savior. No matter how severe your sin, God is willing to redeem & save you. If you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, let me make the application of this passage. Your sins have separated you & God & you are under the judgment of a holy, righteous, & loving God. & He is your only hope & help. Come to Jesus Christ who's offered the atoning sacrifice for you & all of us sinners. Cling to Him as your Redeemer & receive everlasting life.