



Isaiah

Jan 14: God Cannot Be Replaced

Series Summary: God gave Isaiah the difficult task of preaching profound biblical truth to a people who would completely ignore it. But this does not mean that Isaiah's words were wasted because they are a blessing to us today. In this series, we will learn from Isaiah's message about our God, who is a righteous king and an irreplaceable sovereign judge. Yet the very same God is a suffering servant who comforts us in our times of need and provides Hope to the nations.

Big Idea: God gave Isaiah the difficult task of preaching profound biblical truth to a people who would completely ignore it. But this does not mean that Isaiah's words were wasted because they are a blessing to us today. This includes when people don't want to hear about a God who judges us.

Schedule:

- Live teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

Lead in: God (Yahweh) is a jealous God. Not in the toxic jealousy that we show as people, but in the way of knowing that nothing should go before Him. This has to do with His sovereignty and righteousness, and as our Heavenly Father. However, one of the easiest traps we fall into is replacing God with something else in our lives. I would argue that everyone is prone to struggle with this whether we realize it or not. The sin of idolatry, replacing God with something or someone, takes many forms. While the appearance of idolatry may differ, the consequences are the same; replacing God with something or someone else will leave us vulnerable, broken, and condemned.

ISAIAH'S WARNING

Isaiah's warning to Israel is the same in nature as we have today- be aware of things in your life that you may want to replace God with. For us, and in the current day-and-age, these are some of the more popular ones: Dating, comparison, social media, money, acceptance, friendships, politics.

- For Israel, theirs was a form of comparison, but finding it in another nation altogether. This being Egypt. Look at Isaiah's warning to Israel...

Isaiah 31:1-3 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD. **2** Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster; he does not take back his words. He will rise up against that wicked nation, against those who help evildoers. **3** But the Egyptians are mere mortals and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, those who help will stumble, those who are helped will fall; all will perish together.

Context: Around the late 8th century B.C. Judah, the southern tribes, was facing the growing threat of the Assyrian Empire to the North, a powerful military force conquering the region. What was their solution? Trust in God? No. Obviously, they would make a shaky alliance with Egypt.

See the irony! In the Exodus account, we see Israel, then a slave people, being delivered from Egypt. God had proven for all the world to see that he was far greater than Egypt through the ten plagues. So much so that when God's people left Egypt, they were throwing gold and riches at the feet of the Jews so they would leave faster.

They had all the signs and history...So why on earth would Israel rely on Egypt in this time of need? Why would they refuse to trust in God? For the exact same reason(s) that we do today.

1. **They trusted what they could see and touch!** They trusted in Egyptian horsemen (vs 1) because they could see them and touch them. Likewise, we want to trust in something that we can see.
2. **Foreign alliances were what they knew!** Generations before this, during King Ahab's reign (874–853 B.C.) Ahab married Jezebel, a pagan (non-Israel) princess. This brought economic opportunities but also Baal worship, which led to massive spiritual corruption. We tend to find comfort in things we're familiar with instead of addressing and fixing bad habits.

3. **Trusting in God meant they would have to deal with their own rebellion!**

God is described as the “Holy One of Israel.” That is exactly what God is: Holy. He calls us to be holy. Because of this, we will try to replace God just so we don’t have to come face to face with our own sin.

Our solutions—trusting in so many other things rather than God — are exactly the same.

- “What do you trust in above all else?” “What do you say because this is true, I am going to be okay?” That is your idol. That is your God.
- All in all, idolatry never works...

IT DOESN'T WORK!

Context: In the 14th year of King Hezekiah (Israel king), the king of Assyria attacked Judah's fortified cities and captured them. The Assyrian field commander went to Jerusalem to confront Hezekiah. Three of Hezekiah's officials went out to meet the Assyrian envoy.

Isaiah 36:4-6a The field commander said to them (the govt officials), “Tell Hezekiah: ‘This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? 5 You say you have counsel and might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? 6 Look, I know you are depending on Egypt...

- **Idolatry comes down to dependency, and there will be red flags:**
- **Friendships:** We will end up changing our ways for them (talking like them, acting like them, picking up their sin habits, etc).
- **Dating:** We will bypass boundaries just to appease them. We feel like a loser or unlovable if we're single, so we depend on a relationship to satisfy our insecurities.
- **Comparison and Acceptance:** We do whatever it takes to make ourselves feel like we belong. This often means sacrificing holiness to fit in.

Isaiah 36:6b ...that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.

They are all splintered reeds! Whatever we replace God with to trust in times of crisis is always a splintered reed! Some may take longer to fail than others, but they all fail in the end. Yet, unfortunately we seem to always go back to them...just to leave us in shambles again.

Trust in God is ultimately a matter of worship. You see, worshiping God is us responding to and remembering his greatness, his Holiness, and glory. When we stop worshiping God, we will inevitably stop trusting in Him as well. Why? Because all we are left with is seeing our own failures and circumstances.

Isaiah 36:14-15 This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! 15 Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'

If you are going to trust God in times of trouble and trust in him alone, you are going to have to learn to silence the voices telling you not to.

Once again, the irony hurts! The world may look different from thousands of years ago, but we as people haven't changed a bit.

Segway to Small Group: What we are about to see next is a beautiful example of what we are to do when we realize we have placed our faith and trust in all the wrong things. King Hezekiah realized before it was too late what he had to do. Tonight in small group, we are going to learn from him.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get Them Talking: What are some of the things in this life that we try to replace Jesus with, even as Christians?

Why do you think this is?

Leader Note: This is the concept of idolization. While we won't be physically bowing down to a shrine of a dollar bill or our dating partner, our heart is essentially bowing to that object we idolize. This is typically because (fill in the blank) is where we get our worth, peace, "love", identity, and basic sufficiency from. The stem of this is probably found in doubts, fears, or insecurities that we have- in short we trust other things more than Jesus. We may have a general knowledge that Jesus should be our source for all of these things, but deep within we don't trust that he truly is.

READ: ISAIAH 37:1-4 AS A GROUP

1. **Lead In:** When King Hezekiah was confronted with the reality that he had refused to trust in God, he repented of his sin and then ran directly into the temple. This is a

great example for us. When confronted with our wrongs, we repent and run to God. This is what we should do.

However, what do we more commonly do? What do we often do instead of confessing and running to God?

2. What are some red flags that we might idolize something?

Leader Notes/Possible answers: If you ask yourself- "If this was gone out of my life tomorrow, would I be ruined?" If your answer is yes, then this very well may be a red flag you need to pay attention to.

- Where are you the quickest to become defensive and shut others out if they try to have a heart-to-heart conversation with you? This is a massive red flag.
- What thing about you, or thing in your life HAS to be there, or else you feel lost?

READ: ISAIAH 37:14-20 AS A GROUP

3. What sticks out to you about Hezekiah's prayer?

Leader Note: Hezekiah had fully understood that the wooden idols of other nations had not saved anyone. Those idols were a direct mockery of God. You see his heart both of worship and of fear.

4. Lead In: Vs 19 - Hezekiah pointed out that the idols of other nations had not saved them. They were nothing more than wood. He owned what he had gotten wrong. But if we're being honest with ourselves, we like to make excuses in order to hang on to our idols.

What excuses do we make so we feel like we can hang on to what we idolize?

Leader Note: This can look and sound many different ways:

- "I'm not hurting anyone by hanging on to it"
- "I'm just wanting to be happy"
- "This is just the way I am"
- "Stop judging me" / "you don't understand"
- "God would want me to be happy"

5. How are these excuses so dangerous to us? (In terms of living out a devoted faith to Jesus?)

6. What steps can we take, starting now, to drop an idol?

Leader Note: The best answer is the one people hate the most- simply get rid of it. Have it exit your life. This is where the excuse making really comes into play. "Well what if I try and work around it, or limit it?" It shows you're willing to be content with having a divided heart in terms of what you're devoted to. Notice how Hezekiah repented and dropped the false idols instead of trying to barter with God.