



Isaiah

Jan 21: God is a Righteous Judge

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: Gen Z is a very curious generation in terms of spirituality. They are open to hearing about Jesus, they are open to accepting invites to church...but one of the oldest tales of time applies for both Gen Z and people thousands of years ago- people tend to get uncomfortable when they hear things about God that they don't initially like. One of these things is that God is a righteous judge...and people don't like that word "judge/judgment/judging". However, it's a good thing that God is a righteous judge over creation.

ISAIAH INSIGHT

God gave Isaiah the difficult task of preaching profound biblical truth to a people who would completely ignore it. "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding'" (Isaiah 6:9). We hear that and think, "Why would they ignore the very word of God given by a prophet? Well, the message wasn't pleasant.

Isaiah's message

- You people have sinned against God for far too long
- You need to repent of those sins immediately
- If you do not, God, the righteous judge, will correct you

People don't like that messaging. They didn't like it then, and they don't like it today. We do not like to read passages about God's judgment. It makes us uncomfortable! Well, there is a lot in Isaiah that will make you uncomfortable. But should God's judgment make us uncomfortable? Do we truly want a God that does not judge sin and evil? I would argue no. Isaiah would agree. Here is why.

A few questions:

- Is God Holy and righteous? Yes! God is described in Isaiah as righteous and holy (57:15). We want a holy and righteous God!
- Is this world sinful, broken, and evil? Yes. We have to keep our heads in the sand to believe otherwise.
- Why is this world sinful, broken, and evil? Now it gets uncomfortable because people are wicked, sinful, and evil. Now consider this...
- Can God be righteous and turn a blind eye to evil? Would God be righteous if he saw sin and injustice and just said, "Oh well"?

The reality is that we do not want God to ignore sin. We want him to condemn evil and injustice.

CONDEMNING EVIL

Isaiah 2:10-12 Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! **11** The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. **12** The LORD Almighty has a day in store (the Day of the Lord) for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled),

A right understanding of God as a righteous judge leads to humility. Humility is for our good because, without it, we are left with arrogance and idolatry. Without

humility, we begin to view and treat ourselves as God. That is exactly what Israel, and many other nations, had begun to do.

Isaiah 2:13-18 for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan, **14** for all the towering mountains and all the high hills, **15** for every lofty tower and every fortified wall, **16** for every trading ship and every stately vessel. **17** The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, **18** and the idols will totally disappear.

Worship of self condemned: It wasn't just wooden idols of false gods that they worshiped. They worshiped their wealth, their economies, and fortified cities. They worshiped their accomplishments and therefore worshiped themselves. God condemned such sin.

- If someone stole something precious from you, you would be mad. They had sinned by stealing. God's judgment doesn't sound too bad. Why? Because that sin had taken something that was rightfully yours. You were the victim.

Key Point: God judges all sins because all sins are sins against God. This should remind us there is no such thing as an acceptable sin. We may accept something as normal. But God's standards are not our standards.

Isaiah 2:19 People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.

A right understanding of God's judgment leads to a healthy fear of God. Fearing God is a good thing! We need to fear the Lord. It is for our good, a blessing to us. But would we ever fear God if he did not judge wrongdoing?

Isaiah 2:20-22 In that day people will throw away to the moles and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. **21** They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. **22** Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem?

A right understanding of God's judgment is one of the first steps to repentance. It is only when we begin to face the consequences of our actions that we then turn away from our sin.

The unfortunate history is that Israel was warned again and again about God's judgment. Still, it was not until they were carried off into captivity they stopped

trusting in mere humans and instead trusted and worshiped the God who created them and loved them.

We don't have to ignore, downplay, or be uncomfortable when it comes to God's judgment because as believers we are not condemned. We deserve God's judgment. We deserve God's wrath. But that is not what we got, nor is it what we have coming. Instead, we have been shown grace and mercy.

Segway to Small Group: What we are going to see in small groups is that God's judgment should impact how we live our lives, not because we are condemned, but because we have been shown grace rather than the judgment we deserved.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get Them Talking: Do you personally think that it's a good thing that God is a righteous judge? Why or why not?

Why is it dangerous to think of God as a pushover who looks past our sin and evil?

READ ISAIAH 6:1-5 AS A GROUP

Context of the passage: In chapter 6, God calls Isaiah to his ministry of proclaiming judgment against Israel. He tells him that the people will not listen. But there is good news. Even though Isaiah is accurately describing himself and his people as unclean, God will provide a way for their redemption.

1. **LEAD IN:** Vs 3 - The Seraphim had a front row seat to God's glory. How did they respond? By reverent worship. They specifically praised God and declared his holiness and glory. This is a great example for us. When we clearly see God's nature, we respond in worship.

What are some other characteristics of God that we should both remember and worship God for?

Leader Note: You can make this question even more personal by asking, "What characteristics of God are you uniquely thankful for in this season of life?" (example: God's patience, mercy, peace, etc).

2. **LEAD IN:** Vs 5 - Isaiah rightly saw that not only did he come from a people who were unclean and sinful, but he himself was also unclean and sinful.

Why is it so important that we see sin as a problem in our own lives as well as a problem out in the world?

Leader Note: We like to condemn evil out there, but we can easily turn a blind eye to evil within our own hearts and in our own lives.

3. **LEAD IN:** Vs 7 - Isaiah was right in identifying his sinfulness before God, who is a holy and righteous judge. Rather than ignoring Isaiah's sin, God did something vastly better: he said, "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

How does this amazing passage point towards Jesus?

4. **LEAD IN:** We see in this throne room scene that God is both a righteous judge and merciful. God is not one or the other. He is both.

Why is it so important that we remember that God is both a righteous judge and merciful?

READ: ISAIAH 6:8-13 AS A GROUP

5. **LEAD IN:** Isaiah was given a very difficult task of being sent out to a people, Israel, whom God knew would not listen to his message of repentance. Regardless of their response, Isaiah was to be faithful and warn the people of God's righteous judgment. Isaiah's role was messenger. God's role was that of judge.

What is the difference between sinfully judging other people, and evaluating someone else's life that could lead to a loving conversation that hopefully leads to correction?

Leader Note: This conversation and passage can help clear up a common misconception today. You will often hear people say, "The Bible says not to judge." That is true (Matthew 7:1-6). We are not to judge because that is not our role. God is the only righteous judge. However, far too often, people misunderstand what it does and does not mean to refrain from judging others.

- We should not sinfully judge others, but that does not mean we should ever ignore or twist scripture so that we redefine what sin is and is not.
- We should not sinfully judge others, but lovingly confronting a fellow believer about sin in their lives is not judgment. Instead, it is one of the most loving things you can do (Matt 18:15-17).

- We should not judge others, but we can and should be honest with people that God is a holy and righteous judge.

6. **LEAD IN:** Isaiah was given an extremely difficult task of preaching repentance to the nation of Israel, which would never listen. He knew this from the very beginning. Yet he still faithfully obeyed God.

What should this teach us about what it truly means to obey God, and to share our faith with those who need to hear about Jesus?

Leader Note: This is an example to us that our obedience is not measured by how people respond to our message. We are called to share the good news of Christ crucified to all who will listen as ambassadors of the Gospel.

- Will people always respond with a resounding "yes" to the Gospel? No. People may also ignore your biblical counsel.
- But the good news is that we are not responsible for their response. We are simply responsible for giving them an opportunity to respond.