

Christmas Through the Eyes of Isaiah Christmas Puts Thanksgiving in our Hearts

Isaiah 12:1-6

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We are in our Christmas series, Christmas Through the Eyes of Isaiah, looking at the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Today's message, Christmas Puts Thanksgiving in our hearts, is from Isaiah 12:1-6. If we understand the Christmas message, God became a man to save humanity, then as Christians, we should be the happiest people in all the world! Today's passage can be divided into two sections. Verses one to three describe the human response to experiencing God's grace. Then verses four to six describes thanksgiving to God for our salvation as central when God's people gather and then overflows through the witness of his people (4-6). Turn with me to Isaiah 12:1-6 as we hear what God has to say to us today.

Isaiah looks forward to a time when God sends a Better King (11:10-16) unlike any of the kings before him, who calls Israel to repent and believe the Lord. Isaiah declares what will happen "in that day (1)." Isaiah is prophesying what a faithful remnant of Israel will look like when this Better King, Jesus, leads them. In particular, "in that day" points to Isaiah 11:16 when there will be a highway for the faithful remnant turn to God, like when God led Israel out of the land of Egypt. This will be a new Exodus as God leads his people out of slavery from sin and hostility to God and extend to include the Gentile nations, fulfilling God's mission.

Grace Gives us a Reason to be Thankful (1-2)

In that day God's people will thank God because his anger has turned away and God comforted them instead. Our deepest problem is not will we love God but will God love us despite our treason toward him. Some wonder how can a loving God be angry with me? We take it for granted that we are very loveable so it is unthinkable to question God's love for humanity. God is loving but also righteous and just. You cannot pit one attribute of God against another. It is what is called divine simplicity, all that is in God is God and you cannot make some attributes more significant or pronounced others. God is love so all of God is loving but God is just so all of God is just and God is righteous so all of God is righteous. When humanity committed treason, we put ourselves at odds with God. Yet God provided a solution that is both loving and satisfies his justice; God became a man to be the Savior of the world (Jn 4:42).

Then Isaiah describes the comfort God provides as salvation, God is my salvation (2). God is my salvation means that salvation is the work of God, not man. Human sin and darkness have so corrupted us that someone outside us must save us. Isaiah gives us three characteristics of this salvation. First, I do not fear but trust him. Faith is actively relying on God. Fear drives us to distrust God, causing us to question his word, his faithfulness, and his goodness. Second, the Lord is my strength. We have divine strength at our disposal. Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (see also 1 P4:11; Eph 6:11). Salvation gives a spiritual durability against the difficulties of life so we don't cave in against them. Third, the Lord is my song. Thanksgiving is intimately connected to singing in the bible. When God delivered Israel in the Exodus, they sang about it (Ex 15:1-3). The psalms command us over and over to sing with thanksgiving to the Lord for his wonderful works on our behalf.

Grace Gives us Someone who is Deeply Enjoyed (3)

Now Isaiah draws a conclusion that is not explicit in the ESV, therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah has mentioned water twice already, which sheds light on this metaphor here. In Isaiah 7, King Ahaz is afraid so instead of trusting God's promise he is trying to secure a water supply as he prepared for the enemy armies invading (7:1-3). Then Judah is described as rejecting the waters of Shiloh (8:6) which brought water into the city. The imagery in these two references is that the people did not find their hope or their satisfaction in the Lord but in what seemed more practical and immediate. Isaiah says that in that day God's faithful people will find their satisfaction in the Lord. David tasted this, O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for

you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water (Ps 63:1). Water from the wells of salvation is a picture of joyfully running to God as an endless supply of refreshment and replenishment (Jn 4:13-14). The joy that God gives is the supernatural work of the Spirit that breaks the power of lesser joys (Mat 13:44-45).

Grace Gives us Good News to Proclaim (4-6)

Isaiah sees one message spreading to the world, exalting the truth about God, awakening all peoples to the greatness and majesty of God revealed in his saving deeds. As we embrace this mission now, we exalt his name very profoundly.¹ We tell each other and the world to thank the Lord. We tell each other and the world to call on the Lord. We proclaim the glory of the Lord, celebrating the good things God has done for us. The good news is so good that it demands to be shared so we are faithful to the mission of Christ.

Life Group Questions:

1. What are some things you are most thankful for this week?
2. What is Isaiah looking forward to in that day?
3. What does verses 1 & 2 tell us to be thankful for?
4. Is it just for God to be angry with humanity? Why or Why not?
5. How do we reconcile God's love for humanity with his anger toward humanity?
6. What are the three characteristics of those God saves?
7. How are thanksgiving and singing connected?
8. How do you enjoy God?
9. What do you think it means to find our joy and satisfaction in God?
10. Is that difficult for you?
11. How are you actively involved in God's mission?
12. Who has God placed in your life to share the gospel?
13. How is God speaking to you from this text?
14. How does God want you to respond and obey him from this text?

¹ Ortlund, R. C., Jr., & Hughes, R. K. (2005). *Isaiah: God saves sinners* (p. 123). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

