

Fasting that God Hates (and Hates God)

2024.03.17 Morning Sermon in Matthew 6:16

¹⁶Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Main idea: Christians must habitually turn to God as their only Happiness and their only Help, by which He trains our hearts to see and know that this is so in all other happiness or help that He gives us.

Introduction: A brief text, but not a “small” text. Recovering biblical family, biblical fatherhood, biblical fasting, biblical fear, biblical fellowship. There is fasting that God hates!

1. It isn't fasting at all. “They have their reward.”
2. Their goal (problem!): trying to manipulate men.
3. Their strategy: be (or appear) as miserable as possible.
4. Their fathers' goal (problem!): trying to manipulate God (cf. Isa 58:1–5)
5. Their fathers' strategy: actually be as miserable as possible.
6. What both had in common: their fasting was about themselves.
7. The fasting that God wanted instead
 1. Fasting that received liberation from God (cf. Isa 58:6)
 2. Fasting that repented toward others (cf. Isa 58:7)
 3. Fasting that rejoiced in God Himself (cf. Isa 58:8–12)
 4. Fasting that remembered this lesson from the Sabbath (cf. Isa 58:13–14). The Sabbath is the template for fasting!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew 6, 16-18. Let us take heed how we hear this word for. These are the words of God. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the Hypocrites. With a sad countenance.

For they disfigure, their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. But surely I say to you, they have the reward. But you, when you fast, anoint, your head and wash your face. So that you do not appear to men to be fasting. But to your father, Who's in the secret place?

And your father, Who sees in secret. Will reward you. Openly. So far the reading of gods inspired and an errant word Rejoice that he has appointed to be glorified in his own worship. By blessing to us the preaching of his word, please be seated.

This is a brief text, it's just three verses. We may end up taking two weeks. Um, because although it is a brief text, it is not a small. Text.

Uh, at the Presbyterian meeting yesterday, I was reminded at the end of the meeting that last year, we had asked That we would host. And we had been told that we could host this year. In the fall. And when the Presbytery, accepted our invitation, I was surprised because I had forgotten that we had invited, but of course, They are invited.

They're invited every week. To come and spend the Lord's day. Uh, in the Lord's way. But immediately I began thinking because through however else that Providence comes the, last time I was given opportunity to preach at the Presbytery was The fall that I was ordained or else, I wasn't ordained in.

This first of all, that I was installed in this respiratory fall and fall of 2017. And there is so much. Uh, that we need to hear so much. In which the this Presbytery of the associate reformed Presbyterian Church needs to be reformed. And, Praise God. As soon as I started thinking, what should I preach?

Of course. I've been working on. This sermon for the last two weeks and especially this week. And I thought, well, I should preach this sermon. Recovery. Of biblical fasting. Uh, it is incidentally the same. Or similar sermons sermon on the same subject that I've reached the last time. They let me Uh which is on the keeping of the Lord's day, for the Lord's day, the Sabbath is God's chosen fast.

And we'll see that Uh, we'll see that in a moment when we look back at Isaiah 58, which is really the background. Uh, Jesus's instruction here or at least a previous place where Christ by his prophets and his Spirit within His prophets had proclaimed to his people. The right sort of fasting.

The fasting that God has chosen and condemned their fasting described to them. The way they fasted and asked incredulously in Isaiah 58. Is this, the fast that God has chosen Uh, and uh, and so, uh, immediately I thought we would Want to recover biblical fasting and then it occurred to me and glad for God and man to confess that.

I have not taught or preached much on the subject of fasting itself. I remember a couple of sermons when we came across it in, In one scripture or another, and in those times, and at those times, there were those who heard instruction that they had never considered before, but I grew up like many of you in a broadly, Evangelical Church.

We're Doctrine and very careful biblical teaching Through the Bible forming biblical spirituality, Was was not so rigorously or richly taught. And so, I did not hear much teaching or preaching at all on fasting. Growing up. And the Lord having spared at least us to one another. He has given us opportunity to rectify that, but this does fall in those things by which God is reforming us and we bless God for his Mercy to us thus far and in each of the areas.

That he has given us to do. Uh, we cry out to God for more of it. And I realize this is longer than the The introduction or longer than we are commonly accustomed to introducing. But I really want to place this in context for you because when we get to point number two, Jesus assumes that you will fast.

I hope that you will see it in the context of the broader work that he is doing in you now. No, I do know the spiritual background of most of us and I dare say in all of these areas if you have the outline that you see on the introduction and I see one of them is missing.

But family fatherhood fasting, fear is the missing one and and Fellowship, these are things that as we became reformed, whatever point in your life. Uh, you came to be formed more according to scripture and we say reformed because The Lord especially by his Apostles initially formed his church according to scripture.

There was deforming going on the entire time. Uh you know those who appeal to well, this was already there late first century. This was already there early second century that's no argument at all For what the church should do because there were things in the middle of the first century that the apostles were already correcting.

And so Reformation, you know, Reformation as a recovery of that was biblical being reformed being recovered back to being shaped formed by the Bible. And so recovering, the biblical family. Uh, the now in in many places you have to Just the fact that there is such a thing as a family.

Ordained by God, but recovering the biblical family and don't just mean one man. And one woman with their children, Uh, but A family that understands itself to have been consecrated by God. A family that has received baptism as a household. Now, whatever else you may say about the household baptisms in the New Testament and you say, well, it never specifically says that there was An infant in any of those, uh, that's entirely beside the point.

They are household baptisms the entire house receives the same sign because this is how God has designed for families to operate and not just in the New Testament. But among his people, this is what Adam and his wife who did not have yet to be named Eve because no Redemption was yet necessary before the fall.

They were to be fruitful and multiply image bearers who walked with God and kept the Sabbath and took dominion in God's name Imaging him and in his creation, doing all their work Imaging him and and this is what God does. When he redeems that households are to have a family life of discipleship, going out and speaking God's word uh to one another with one another about whatever they are doing.

When they're up coming in and speaking God's word and living according to that word being mindful together. And framing their days that way when they rise when they lay down, having that Worship in God's word in the evening of the day. And when they rise up having uh their Worship in God's word at the beginning of the day forming that day in which they're going to go out and come in with the word of gods together.

That the family is an institution of God for walking with him for Fellowship with with him and recovering. The biblical family has been something that God has started giving to, uh, to many of us and we're grateful to him. And we feel very convicted, especially uh, when we preach morning and evening time together with God, but often it's later in the morning before we get to it or we miss, uh, we have the morning and miss the evening, not, we're all being reformed by scripture here.

So recovering the biblical, uh, family and recovering That small groups were invented by God. The the household is God's small group. The the reason we feel such a lack in our modern American churches, uh, that, uh, that we've come up with small groups to fill. The reason there is that Gap in fellowship and that Gap in understanding and that Gap in service.

Yeah, those things that families are supposed to do together, worshipping God together serving the church together serving their neighbor uh together, discipling, and being disciplined together. The reason we have that Gap is because we have ignored God's small group and one of the great difficulties in small groups, in any size church is finding an appropriate number of leaders who are assigned and trained and convicted, well, God's small groups have built-in leaders And in fact the the entire Old Testament concludes in Malachi with the fact that when Christ's Forerunner comes and when Christ himself comes the hearts of fathers will be turned back to their children and children back to their fathers.

And and so it's a frightening thing. It's always uh, frightening when our sin is so attached to us. It's like a cancer and as the holy spirit is helping us to kill it, it feels attached to vital organs of our lives and just pulling it out and and leaves us raw sometimes.

You know, being fitted together as living stones is unpleasant, because you have to grind a stone down to have a good flush face. But it's, especially frightening if you're the father Because you are the head of your wife. You are supposed to be bathing her with the word, as the Lord, Jesus bathes his bride with the with the scripture to, uh, for her to be made.

Holy you are the father of your children. The the buck with, for raising them up and the fear and admonition of the Lord, it stops with you. Even if you uh, you rightly are leading your wife and putting in more of the hours, you you bear, uh, more of the weight.

And so we have this biblical fatherhood and not just limited to your own household but you read and start paying attention to the Bible. And and go through it verse by verse in many places like many, uh like many of you are and what do you discover that you're not just a father to the children who gather around your table in this beautiful?

Psalms 128 language are springing up around your table. Uh,

Mercy to be a father of generations that your children then will tell the gospel and disciple their children and their children a generation yet unborn and so forth. And and you have this language and so recovering biblical family and recovering biblical fatherhood will come to fasting. In a moment, I just want you to take Matthew 6, verses 16 through 18 and if these things that you are hearing now and some of you are newer To being reformed and you don't have to come to Hopewell to be reformed.

But In the low condition, in which the church is, I'm not sure where else around here. There are other congregations. Praise God, that are reformed and and According to scripture in in other places, but many of you have felt as you strike out in these things. Oh, I want to share this with everyone and you, you share it with your friends and they're oh, that's that's weird.

Um, Well. I I want you to take Matthew 6, verses 16 through 18 and put it in the context of all of the other gloriously weird things. That the Lord has taught you from his word. As you started to recover biblical family, even when you're doing it poorly, even when you're you're crying out.

Lord. Yeah, I'm in my 40s. I'm in my 50s. And I never did this before but it's so obviously right you're originally blessing it. But look at how badly I do it and how inconsistently have mercy and help me, because I can see now how good you are and how wise your design is.

You to put fasting in context with that family and that fatherhood and biblical fear of God, that we don't draw near to him. Like Nate. Evan abaihu, those who draw near to God, without reverencing him draw near to God without realizing that the Living God cannot be approached by man in any other way than, as the Living.

God has commanded to be lest we come irreverently that true fear of the Lord. True worship of God is to Rejoice over the fact that he has brought us near in Jesus Christ. And that the things that he has commanded for his worship are the things that are in Christ.

So we refuse to do, anything else in the worship of God, except for what he has commanded. And what Christ now prays God now personally leads from Glory at the time of nadab and about you Christ did not yet. Become man, Christ had not yet spilled his blood to consecrate the worship.

Is now located for us in the assembly there that we join. Lord say by Lord said, but it was still that, which was appointed by God that looked forward in faith to Jesus Christ. This is the fire would come out from God would actually come out from The Mercy Seat and consume them and kill them because they by bringing what God had not commanded did not come through faith.

In Christ, did not come through the mercy, that, that Mercy Seat signified to them. And so we do we have weird worship in which there is not performance music. And there are not, uh, there are not, you know, musician, uh, worship leaders where the worship leaders are the Elders of the church, because there's a worship leader, capital L in heaven, and he has officers servants that he has designated as the leaders of the word and Sacrament and And so, the elders are the worship.

Are the worship leaders and we do strange, things like sing a lot of Bible and read a lot of Bible. And And have long sermons and we don't have even other elements quote unquote that so-called reformed people have discovered quote unquote in the last few hundred years like the Gathering of a collection or the the saying of uh of Creeds.

You know, these are not parts of the worship of God that he has commanded the, the Apostle when there was collecting the, the Apostle said, make sure that you do it the first day of the week, you can do it on the Lord's day, but don't do it in in the assembly because when I come, I don't want there to be any collecting, that's not an element of worship.

It's something that the Apostle said, please do not do that when I am there, which, of course, he would not say about anything commanded because when we, when we say, we will not do anything that God has not commanded in his worship. We are also wanting to say we

God has commanded in his worship with the Living. God give us some way of drawing near to himself Drawing Near through Jesus Christ in Jesus Christ and we would leave it out. No, of course, we would not and and this fearing God in the worship. Where you have this gain awareness that in the public worship of God, Our Redeemer, Our Savior gathers us to himself, and he does it without compromising his Holiness and he does it without compromising his glory.

He does it without compromising his Justice. And so we would not be so bold to come at all. Except that we have faith in Jesus Christ and he has perfectly obeyed in our place. Indeed. He is the god man and his righteousness on our behalf is the righteousness of God.

And so we come as righteous as God himself is, by faith in Jesus Christ, and he has spilled his blood. He is atone for our sin, his wiped away, our guilt. He's propitiated God's. Wrath God is

entirely propitious favorable towards us now. So being sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We don't just come, we come,

Is we come with boldness into the holy of holies through the new and Living Way that that is his flesh and you realize that and suddenly you're not like that church is so weird. There's so many things that they don't do that. Everyone else does and there are so many things that they do that nobody.

Nobody else would uh, would do and you say, no, no, it's not weird, it's reformed. And we Rejoice that we are being conformed back to the Bible recovering biblical fear of God fear that trembles. But trembles with confidence, and hope and joy because God is bigger to us than our sin because Christ is bigger to us than our sin and because Christ is the one in whom we come to God.

So he is not even responding to our sinfulness so much and how he deals with us. Sin. He won't let us keep it. He's determined to destroy it, but he's responding to Christ's righteousness, even in how he deals with our sin. He said, praise God. For this worship recover, biblical, fear, and then, Recovering.

Recovering biblical Fellowship. The the Christian Fellowship is is not mere socialization. That when we gather to God and we Gather in this new way, we are stirring up one another to love and good works. And the first great love, the love of God with all the heart. Soul, mind and strength, and the first great good work.

The worship of God and the way that he says, but it's not the only love and it's not the only work because God has made man in His image. And so we love our neighbor as ourselves and and part of the good works that we're stirred up to is helping our neighbor and all the things that he needs in this Earthly life that he knows about.

But he's even in in more desperate trouble than he knows, isn't he? Because there are things that he desperately needs that. He doesn't know about, especially the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God on his behalf, the Forgiveness of God to take away his sin life and light and fellowship and joy and purpose and dignity, that that he can have with God.

And so we stir one another up to that's the fellowship of Believers, it's not just merely hanging out with other things that we like, praise God, we we can enjoy nature together and and all of those those things. Neighbor and loving one, another and stirring, one another up to to love and good works.

This this life of a congregation where, you know, back we Earlier in the introduction for still in the introduction. Earlier into the introduction talking about what a Biblical family is a family for which the main thing that we enjoy in the family is God himself and walking with God, we're not just a family that believes certain things and we're not just a family that does certain things and doesn't do other things.

But whatever else we do, the main thing in every Christian family is the same thing, knowing God together trusting in Christ together, walking in car, walking in fellowship with God together. And what's true then of your household family. Uh, ought to be then true of your church family, those who dare to spend enough time with You know, forgive the Hopewellians members of Hopewell is feels like a mouthful.

Those who for dare to spend enough time with hope Williams often come away with. You know, this is such an amazing Community, how they love to spend time together how they love to serve together uh and and so forth, but that's not the main thing. The reason the manner in which Christ produces that Community is because the main thing that we have together is walking with him biblical fellowship.

And now Biblical fasting. And the first part of that, that some that many of you have been introduced to, although you might not have called it. That is the keeping of the Lord's Day, the sanctifying of the Lord's day. How many? Uh, how many? Who either they knew nothing about Sabbath, keeping or they Associated it with ironically Seventh-Day Adventists who do not keep the Lord's Sabbath because The Lord's Sabbath is the first day of the week.

The day that he himself and his word calls the Lord's day or the first day Sabbath, as some of you. I have. Received that instruction before, you know, either they, they never heard a Sabbath keeping. They're associated with Seventh-Day, Adventist, or maybe they Associated it with, you know what?

They felt like were really uptight rigorous, uh, miserable sounding People who thought you still had to keep the fourth Commandment. Uh, but When you come and you start to keep the Lord's day in the manner that he has. Designed that it is the The great holiday of the Christian.

In fact, there are no other holidays. Of the of the Christian there are holidays of men but there's only one holiday of Christ. His Instituted just the one day and suddenly, it's a day that Jesus made for you and Jesus made for you on which to not make you do things and forbid you to do other things that's involved.

Uh, but it's secondary. He has given you that day because it's the day. He gives himself to you in an undivided concentrated uninterrupted delighted devoted intimate way that we just can't have on other days because he has some consecrated those other days in that way. And because he gathers his assembly on that day, and there are things that he does in the assembly.

There are ways that he meets us in his assembly that are just not available to us in other ways and on other days. And, and so the Lord's day as this. Beginning in that many of us have made a beginning in that this the preacher himself feels often, like he's hardly made a beginning but oh, what a beginning.

As soon as you come to begin to see it and understand it as a gift of God, the first great gift of God, he super adds the Sabbath. He creates the whole rest of the world and then he creates the man and the woman and the man, and the woman are different from the rest of the world and that they're made in His Image and they're made for Fellowship within.

And then he says you've got all of this work to do and the rest of the world and they get up in the morning on the seventh day. He says all of that work that I gave you to do yesterday. Evening, hold it for a day. Today. The creation is not your joy.

The Creator is For today. Work in the creation is not your work fellowship, with the Creator is You think we're a people who need rest? Adam and Eve on the first day of their existence, sorry, Adam and the woman on the first day of their existence already needed, rest.

And yet rest does not rest, if it's not a resting in the Lord and a rejoicing in the Lord and many of you have started to experience that and many of you are familiar, then with Isaiah 58, 13 and 14 because you you've gone to those verses and you've seen.

That is true when I turn my foot away. Count of the Sabbath from my own thoughts. My own words, my own works and I obey God by calling his day a delight. Then God in his Mercy, blesses that which he is appointed and the more that I have called his Day a delight, the more he has used his day as a means to make me Delight in him.

So that the rest of my life is so light and joyful and affectionate effective that it feels like a deer jumping around in the Hills. That's the that's the image there in Isaiah 58, 13 and 14 and that is what brings us. Back by way of. Half an hour or so introduction.

To Matthew 6. Verses 16 through 18. Moreover, when you fast. Do not be like the Hypocrites. Do not be like the two-faced people. Who fast? Because it's not real fasting. It's god-hated fasting. And we'll see in the first place. Fasting that God hates. It's not fasting at all. In fact, God really hated the fasting that he was condemning in Isaiah 58.

And the fasting that Jesus is observing here that has been taking place, among the Jews of his day that he was mourning, his disciples against was even worse. Than what was in Isaiah 58. Maybe not as subtle but worse. And so in the first place, we'll hear about the fasting that God hates and we may be We may be done at that point and have to come back next Lord's day and pick up for uh, the second and third points.

Because, We're going to have to spend an entire point on the fact that Jesus assumes that you will fast. Now, one of the reasons why you may not fast or one of the reasons you may not know about fasting is because in the third Point, how Jesus says to fast is that, if it's a personal fast, if it's not a household fast, it's not a congregational past, it's not a national fast and those Those are all appropriate.

We'll get there. When Uh, when we get there. If it's a personal fast, the mature believer. You don't even know that they're fasting. Because their Redeemer has instructed them. To take such appearance and to carry on in such a way. That no one would know. Because they're a lot, they're fasting unto the Lord to Delight in the Lord.

And so they are being careful that only the Lord knows that they're fasting. Because only the Lord is their Delight is, their purpose, is their pleasure in their fasting. So so it may be that you have heard less about fasting than otherwise because there are mature Believers fasting. The way that Jesus says to you, Or it may also be.

You haven't heard much about fasting. Because in the churches, or in the family, Or among the other believers that you know there just has not been a lot of fasting. And so, we'll hear in the second place. Jesus assumes. That his disciples will fast, he assumes that Christians will fast.

And then in the third place, having established that Christ expects us to fast and looking at when we should fast. Uh, we'll consider how Jesus says, To fast. First, then this fasting that God hates. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the Hypocrites. With a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces.

That they may appear to men to be fasting. Asurely, I say to you? They have. Reward.

I don't know. How many of you have? Um, I had much experience with With Roman, Catholics with papists in your life, I grew up in a suburb of Detroit. Detroit was a very Papers City. Some of you have, of course, I'm sure have seen on calendars or even heard misguided, God help us so-called Evangelical Christians, observing something called Ash, Wednesday.

Uh, do you know why it's called that? It's because that's the day upon which those who engage in the sort of fasting that God hates disfigure, their faces with ashes because ashes are

a Biblical indication of a sad countenance. We still have it's disappearing because the lack of knowledge of the Bible in our culture, but we still have the phrase sackcloth and Ashes to talk about someone who is really uh grieving and and sad.

And of course, you know, you had insult to idolatry or idolatry to insult or and you don't just have the ashes you make them in the sign of the cross. Symbol to be worn or assigned to be made. Rather than An event a moment in which God the son after living, an obedient life had atoned for us, when he was executed by men and punished by God, for the sins of everyone who would believe in him and so complete abuse.

Of the Cross. And so, This fasting. He says, When they, when they have a sad countenance, they make their face sad and they disfigure their faces. It's because they are hoping to appear to men to be fasting. And Jesus says of that. Well, as soon as the men see the cross on their forehead and they have appeared to men to be fasting, they have received all of the benefit that they're going to get and it's no benefit at all.

They have the reward. They want to be seen by men men, see them. The end. It's over. It doesn't impress God, it doesn't help the man. It has no spiritual benefit. God hates it. It's not real fasting. Uh, what is their goal? Their goal is to manipulate men. What is their strategy?

To be. Or in this case, they aren't even actually miserable. They're just trying to appear to men. To be as miserable as possible. Now, this is a problem because God has talked about fasting before Christ before his Incarnation by, uh, by his Spirit, carrying along the prophet. Isaiah has talked about fasting before and he hates sad fasting.

He says, that's not the fast that I choose. That's the fast that you chose. You thought I was wicked. You thought I was a hard master. You thought that I enjoyed the misery of my people And so you thought that if you appeared or rather even made yourself as miserable as you could that I would owe you because that's the kind of God.

I am who gets my uh Delight out of my people's pain. Gets my pleasure out of my people's pain. Let's If you have a copy of the word of God and repeat this often, I don't know how you. I can listen to the preaching on an ongoing or consistent basis without a copy of the Bible.

But turning into Isaiah 58.

Isaiah 58, which concludes we'll read. We can read that from the introduction. We'll come back to verse one. In a moment. 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 Yahweh, honorable and shall honor him.

Not doing your own ways, not finding your own pleasure nor speaking. Your own words, in other words, he's got ways for the day, he's got pleasures for the day. He's got words for the day, use his not yours. Okay, those Well, we'll we'll come. Uh back to that then you keep his day that way.

No notice that this is given as a corrective to the wrong kind of fasting that the Jews were doing in Isaiah 58 which is the sister of or the, the ancestor of the fasting that the the Jews were doing Behind our text in Matthew 6 16-18. The one of God's answers is look at what the Sabbath is and for and know that fasting is and for the same thing If you keep his day that way, he says, if you keep the Sabbath that way, then you shall delight yourself in Yahweh.

And I will cause you to ride on the high heels of the Earth. And feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father. And of course, that Heritage is not just a land, is not just a multiplication of people, but God himself. I will be your God and you will be my people.

The mouth of Yahweh has spoken. Well, that's God's response to this. Hypocritical view of fasting, this two-faced view of fasting and listen to how it ties in to their entire religion, cry aloud. This is Isaiah 58 beginning. In verse 1, cry, aloud spare not lift up your voice like a trumpet, tell my people, their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet, they seek me daily. And Delight to know my ways as a nation. That dead righteousness. And Did not forsake, the ordinance of their God. Okay, so They, they have their their daily worship. And they go to their Bible studies they Delight to know my ways the the nation has in God we trust on all the buildings and uh and all the money and they have the Ten Commandments and all the Halls as a nation that did righteousness.

And there are also churches that hold to the external form of the regular principle did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They're even theonomists. They ask of me. The ordinances of Justice. So, whatever God says, a statute is a statute is a statute and whatever God doesn't say, is not a statute, they take Delight in approaching God, they don't miss, they don't miss the public portion.

You know, they're they're, you know, every Wednesday and twice on Sunday and And so forth. And it's it's to the verse two type people. That God says, To Isaiah in verse 1, Tell my people, their transgression. And the house of Jacob, their sins. The verse two type people almost sounds like a people that much of the church in America is just trying to get back to And they're the ones that are being condemned.

By the prophet Isaiah. Why how Verse 3. And here's where we get into the connection to our text. Why have we fasted? They say and you have not seen. Why have we Afflicted? Our souls? And you take no notice. God's answer. In fact, in the day of your fast, You find pleasure.

And exploit all your laborers. 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. You hear what he's saying? The kind of fast that you have chosen. It doesn't come with repentance.

You claim to be so religious. But you are still trying to squeeze your neighbor. For everything you can to get out of him. You're not trying to serve him and if you happen to have the upper hand, you oppress him. And make him to work like a slave for you and the reason you sin against your neighbor like that is because you're sinning against your God like that.

Did you really think? That by being as miserable as possible, you could make your voice heard on high. That you could use religious exercises like a fist that you can ball up and beat God and beat the blessings out of God like a pinata.

That's personal. Because then you're treating God as someone who enjoys The misery. Of his people. And this applies, of course, not just to fasting it applies to, our whole religion. Doesn't it everything? We do everything. We're instructed to do from scripture. If it is not done trusting God that he loves us and loves to do, good to us.

It is not what God has commanded. This ties very much to prayer. The last couple of weeks doesn't it? Like, the Pagan who is trying to make God hear him by his many words, And it's not a coincidence. I mean they coincide but it's not merely coincidental. That the same ones who come up with praying the rosary.

Are the ones who come up with disfiguring, the faces. Because prayer is not trying to get out of God, the stuff that he's too tight-fisted to give me. It is knowing that my Father in heaven knows what I need and coming in submission to him and fellowship with him.

And willingness to receive the better thing that he knows. Not because I begrudgingly say well, I guess so because it's you God. But because I say thank you Father that you know better than I do and you loved me so much that you gave Christ for me. And you've forgiven my sin and now you're treating me according to him whom you sent and his righteousness because you sent him in that love so that I wouldn't perish but I would have life in him and part of that life in him is whatever you are bringing into my life.

Well, the same thing then with fasting. God does not want you to be miserable. He doesn't look at your fleshly pleasures and say they're too Pleasant those people shouldn't be so happy. No, he looks at your fleshly pleasures that he says. Don't you see how they're fleshly? How they're temporary, how they lead you into sin, how they hold you in bondage, how they can't do anything for you, or for your soul?

How they cannot last into eternity? How they do not lift up your heart into heaven, those Pleasures are too small for you stop. No, he doesn't do it without authority. But he certainly does that with pleading urging love. And so he says about the fasting. That they were doing.

Is it a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul. Just to bow down his head, like a bull rush. Where everyone becomes Eeyore and even people who had never asked you how you are doing. You know, you're you so drippy everyone's like, are you okay?

To afflict his soul to bow down his head like a bulrush to spread out, sackcloth and Ashes. Would you call this? A fast. An acceptable day to Yahweh. And then he goes on in verse 6 is not this, the fast that I have chosen, but you see how he says it's personal in verse five.

You see how it says the way that you're approaching fasting. Has to do with how you view me, what you think God is like, the way you view approach your religion. Is a direct expression of what you think, God is like. And so, whereas the Jews Day, the scribes and the Pharisees, the Hypocrites.

Goal was to manipulate men and therefore their strategy was to appear as miserable as possible and that's what Jesus condemns in verse 16. Their father's goal. In Isaiah 58 was not just to manipulate men, it was to manipulate God. And they were mad that it wasn't working. And so, their father's strategy was to actually be as miserable as possible.

And so what both had in common. Was that their fasting was about those themselves? Their fasting was about themselves. It wasn't about God. It wasn't about their need for him. It wasn't about their desire for him. It was about what they were doing to get, what they Wanted. Where biblical fasting is doing what God says to get what God wants.

And what God says we should want. So, what is the fasting that God wanted instead? He fills that out in the rest of 58 and We'll take the 10 or so. Minutes. To do this and then we'll close and we'll come back. Lord willing next week. He says, 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. Now, verse 6 is, is initially God towards them as they fast, and then the result, the fruit in verse 7, then towards others that those who have a God who loves to liberate and enjoy, his Liberty, also become like their God as those who love to liberate.

See others. Enjoy Liberty. Says, I'm not enslaving you. I'm freeing you the fast that I have chosen is to loose the bonds of wickedness. The fact that I have chosen is not to burden you, It's to lighten your Lord to take away your lord. Now you can start hearing, can't you?

Those of you who have begotten a a habit of joyous intentional keeping of the Lord's day. And find. This is the lightest day of the week because you've been forced to set, aside your other loads. You're not even allowed to think about them on this day. Is there just leave it all?

Come be unburdened. Be freed. To undo the heavy burdens. And let the oppressed Go free and that you break every yoke. Okay, so this is what God is. Like, this is the fast that he has chosen, and this is what it should produce in us. It should produce repentance in, You remember they were abusing other people because they were abusing God.

Well, what about those who instead of abusing God are being done? Good by God? Well, they do good to other people. Verse 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 neck that you cover him and not hide yourself from your own flesh, you'll recognizing that Uh, that he is made in the image of God.

We don't have time to go over all that and specific, but then your light shall break forth like the morning. You're healing shall spring forth. Spreadily, your righteousness, shall go before you very much like what he said in Isaiah 48, that if they didn't need the Exile to Babylon, they would not have been exiled to Babylon.

If they had trusted in the Lord and served the Lord, their their peace would have already flown like a river with. No, no end towards of the peace. Just is continually flowing. Their righteousness would already have been like oceans. He says, in verse 48. If you, if you in your fasting, you learn to know God like this and rest upon him and rejoice in him.

The way the Sabbath trains you to verse 13 through 14. If you brought that in as instructing, you how to fast you fast. This way that he says in verse 6, and verse 7, then, You don't just have your reward, you're continually rewarded. Your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing, shall spring forth, spread.

Speedily your righteousness shall go before you the glory of Yahweh. Shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call. Yahweh will answer You shall cry and he will say here I am. He flips the tables. Like Samuel. Who had first thought it was Eli's voice. And he called, he comes and It says you you uh you called and Eli figures out, what he's going.

He says It's, it's the Lord. So, when he calls you say here I am. For your servant is listening. He says If you learn to trust in God, And to lighten him and walk with him in this way. When you call in on him, Yahweh God, the I am that I am who created all things and all things are from him and through him, and to him, and to him is all the glory, when you call he will say, here I am.

Then you shall call and Yahweh will answer. You shall cry and he will say, here I am. If you take away the yolk from your minced, the pointing of the finger. The speaking wickedness, extend your soul to the hungry, you satisfy The Afflicted, Soul, Uh, there are many, who will pick and choose, right?

They'll cherry pick this and see what the church is. Missing is social justice. The church is failing to love its neighbor. This open-handedly because it does not know God in the gospel as the one who has restored us to such a fellowship so that his generosity to us is what overflows in generosity to others.

We don't do a bunch of good things in order to feel good about doing good. We have our God and he is good. And that is what makes us good and fills our hands with good for others. Then your light shall Dawn in the darkness, your Darkness shall be as the noon day.

Yahweh will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your bones. And this is related to the fasting, isn't it? Because in fasting in biblical fasting is is not. Um, giving up something evil, you're supposed to give everything evil up. All the time. Biblical fasting is ordinarily, fundamentally fasting from food.

Is giving up something you need in order to not die. This is why it's so silly. You know, I have 40, we used to do this. I'm talking about something from from my fleshly upbringing. My under instructed upbringing. I'm fasting from video games. I'm fasting from TV. I'm fasting from buffets.

I'm fasting from dessert. I'm fasting. Uh from alcohol not that alcohol itself is bad but you know someone who is habitually he has stuck to it. I'm going to practice a dry month. If you're in such a place that you need a dry month for any sort of benefit, Then maybe you should practice that dry longer than a month.

Uh, but I'm fasting. No, no, no. I'm fasting from food as like I'm fasting from Air. I'm fasting from water. I'm fasting from sleep. Biblical fasting is fasting from food because it's it's the the one, if you don't do it, you're gonna die thing that God has designed us to be able to not do for a little longer.

Uh, Than a day or two and we'll come back. To that. But he says, Yahweh will satisfy your soul in drought. And strengthen your bones. You're going to discover. That you are more needy of God than you are of food and water. And that he is more satisfying. To that need.

Than food and water are to your physical hunger. And your physical thirst. Now, there's more to it than that, that's as far as verse 10 goes. And I think instead of singing 464 We'll, Psalm 63. So if we be prepared to pull a red book out, I know that.

Um, in God's Providence, to you, you can come to Hopewell for years and never pull a book out. Uh, we'll do that after Uh, the sermon. Yahweh will satisfy your soul and drought and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a water garden, like a spring of water, whose Waters do not fail.

You hear the echo of Psalm 1 there. That the man who takes his Delight in the law of the Lord, who takes a delight in fellowshiping with the Lord, he's like a tree planted by streams of water. All the other trees are like, oh no, it's the dry season.

We're dying. But the one who, who rests in the Lord rejoices in the Lord says, I don't know what you all are complaining about my roots are in the Stream.

Those from among you shall build the old waste places, you shall raise up the foundations of many generations. You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. Is that not a verse for this time? Not just in the nation, but in the church in our nation, Have not many generations worth of foundations, been destroyed, and crumbled.

And those things that were once institutions become ruins and old waste places. Do we not? And in terms of the context of where God has put you and when God has put you in the church and in the nation, do we not need repairers of the breeches. People who stand in what used to be a wall, but is now a gap people who rebuild Well, you don't get people like that by people

who think that they are the strength and that they are the joy and who manipulate God by what they do.

Because they're so anxious and miserable. It's such a weird thing. Whether it's on the dispute, Baptist, end of the spectrum or the ultra post-millennialist, end of the spectrum. They're a lot weirder. Because at least these guys say I'm pessimistic. These guys over here, say I'm so optimistic that I think everything is dying and I'm the only hope Isaiah, 58 says.

The one whom God will use. Has a confidence that cannot be taken away. By hunger. By thirst. By any oppression. They have Sabbath by Sabbath the Lord himself as their Delight. And when they fast, they're not balling up their fist to strike God, like a pinata. They are delighting in The God Who has liberated them from themselves and especially from their sin.

And they count everything he commands them to do. As a joyous gift, they are not running around and saying legalist and everyone who says to obey God's command. The Cry for the legalists. Who thinks they can earn something from God by their obedience and who are impressed with themselves instead of impressed with the God who has given them both the command and the grace to obey it.

And so, these repairs of the breeches are verse 13 and 14. The Sabbath Keepers. The ones who can't wait for the Lord's Day, whose kids have never heard of another holiday or they hear it and they hear, they hear it the same way as they hear about Buddhist holidays or Muslim holidays or whatever.

Because there's nothing like the Lord's day, there's nothing that man can make that would compare to that and they're looking forward to it. And Dad is in the restored, family and his restored fatherhood over that, that family, he's preparing his family every day of the week for the next Lord's Day.

He knows the service is going to be long and the sermons are going to be long, and the readings are going to be long. And so he teaches his kids, Isaiah 47, and 48. So that when their Elder leads them in prayer, they've already read that passage. They've already studied that passage.

Dad has already LED them in a prayer from that passage. And of course, this is going to make a huge difference for them. And they come and they say this is the day that Yahweh has made. Let us Rejoice and be glad to it. Jesus is in heaven. We are going to heaven to be with Jesus.

We are coming to Father through our elder brother and Jesus is going to preach to us. And Jesus is going to let me sing his word and when I sing his word, I'm admonishing the rest of the congregation Because Jesus sings his word through me. He he He is the one who sings his father's praise in the midst of the assembly.

Hebrews 2 verse 11. And they don't say, is it over now or can we go home yet? Because I haven't learned from their parents to wish that it was over or that they could go home yet. And so, as long as they have opportunity to keep Gathering and keep hearing and keep singing and keep praying, They are glad to do it because they're fasting.

Fasting from their own words, fasting from their own works, even fasting from their own Pleasures. Six days a week. They love to swing because it's swinging one day a week. They love to swing because if I get my wiggles out and I bring my energy back down to something controllable, I will be able to worship better.

When we come again to sing and to hear preaching, A child is not going to come up with that all by themselves. They have to have a DAT who's trying to do that himself for himself first. And whose teaching and training his family to do that. Because today is a fast day.

It's a fasting day. From all those other things that are lawful, even all those other things that are pleasurable and good and helpful and necessary. What do you think eating is? Is pleasurable and good and helpful and necessary. But when you fast from eating, it's supposed to be after the pattern of what the Lord's day is.

This is why the Westminster assembly did not get it wrong. When he's when they they said devoting the whole day. To the public and private exercises of the worship of God, except for so much as must be taken up in Deeds of necessity and mercy. And not allowing any unnecessary.

Thoughts words or Works? About either worldly employments or worldly Recreations? Why? Because we are fasting from them. Because fasting is not about you and it's not about what you are fasting from. It is about whom you are fasting. Unto. Depending upon the Lord more than food. Delighting in the Lord.

More than food. Because the Lord is good. And as we'll sing in a moment from Psalm 63, His steadfast love is better than life.

So fasting that received Liberation from God fasting that repented towards others fasting that rejoiced in God himself. And fasting that remembered this lesson. That God himself is all of our help and all of our happiness. Fasting that remembered this lesson from the Sabbath. Which is Jesus's template for fasting.

Which is so offensive. Which is why. The fasting that he was correcting was so offensive. Now that you've heard again? The background, listen to verses 16 again. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the Hypocrites. With a sad countenance. For they disfigure, their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

Surely I say to you. They have their reward. Well, the Lord sparing us to one another. Another week. We may come back and Um, Jesus's assumption, that we will fast and how Jesus says, for us to fast. Let's pray.

Or gracious, God. Indeed, you are our glorious. God, which you have given yourself. For us and to So that you have committed yourself and all of your glory. Unto our good. In Christ, you have given us blessing where we deserved only curse. In Christ, you have made yourself our strength.

Whereas in ourselves, we had only weakness. And so we praise You our gracious. God and our heavenly father. Who is not just so wise that, you know, the good to give us. But who are so abundant in your steadfast love. That you desire to give us that good more than we desire for ourselves.

Grant. Oh God, your spirit. Whom you know how to give to your children as the best of your good gifts. Grant that your spirit would apply to our hearts, this part of your word. So that when we fast, we would not fast in a way that you hate. And in a way that harms, But give us to fast in the way that takes pleasure in you.

And pleases you. And by which you do us so much good. Thus grant us, repentance of our sins. And forgive us our sins. We pray through Christ for indeed. There are many But we rejoice in you through him. And so we pray that you would help us for his sake.

Amen.