

**Wednesday, May 22, 2024 • Read Isaiah 58**

Questions from the Scripture text: What does v1 say Isaiah is to be telling God's people and the house of Jacob? Whom does v2 say that they seek daily? What does v2 say that they delight to know? What does v2 say that they ask of God? Whom does v2 say that they take delight in approaching? What questions do the people ask in v3? What does v4 say are the reasons that they were fasting? What were they trying to make happen? What does v5 say that they did to their souls when they fasted? What did they do to their heads? What does v6 say that God wants their fasts to be like? What does v7 say they should do as a result of their fasts? To whom should they bring their bread? Whom should they bring into their house? What should they do for the naked? If their fasts are like this, what does v8 say will break forth like the morning? What will spring forth speedily? What will go before them? What will be their rear guard? Upon whom does v9 say they will call? What will He do? To whom will they cry? What will the Lord say when they cry? What does v9 say are three things that people who trust in and worship God will take away? To whom does v10 say they will extend their souls? Whom will they satisfy? What does v10 say will then come into the darkness? And what will their darkness be like? Whom does v11 say will guide them continually? Who will satisfy their souls as in drought? Who will strengthen their bones? What does v11 say they will be like? What does v12 say they will rebuild? What will they raise up? What will they be called? From what were they to turn their feet on the Sabbath (v13)? Whose day is it? What were they to call a delight? What were they to call honorable? Whom do we honor when we delight in the Sabbath? Whose ways are they not to do on the Sabbath? Whose pleasure are they not to find on the Sabbath? Whose words are they not to speak on the Sabbath? What (whom!) does v14 say that this kind of Sabbath-keeping will make them delight in? Upon what will this Sabbath keeping make us to ride? Upon whose heritage will this kind of Sabbath-keeping make us to feed?

**What peace does a true prophet proclaim?** Isaiah 58 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these fourteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **a true prophet proclaims the peace of true religion, finding God in Christ to be the great good and the great delight, Who has given us a day to train us in delighting in Him.**

**The nature of false religion, v1-3.** This chapter compares the false religion of the wicked who have no peace (cf. 57:20-21) with the true religion into which the Servant brings His offspring. False religion that thinks that God owes us for making ourselves miserable by obeying Him (v3). Such religion treats worship and obedience as miseries that we endure so that God will be satisfied with what we do. Doesn't it frighten you, dear Christian, that these people sought God daily, and delighted to know His ways, and asked from Him ordinances of justice, and took delight to approach Him (v2)... and yet the introduction to this entire chapter was a trumpet-blast announcement of their sin (v1)?

**The fruit of false religion, v4-5.** If such eagerness for worship, and zeal for learning, and commitment to obedience can be condemned by God as wicked, how can we tell by the fruit of our lives if we genuinely belong to God or not? Thankfully, our passage highlights a fruit that comes from false religion: driving others hard, accusing others, speaking wickedly (v9b). It turns out that if we consider God hard and demanding and uncaring with us (v5), requiring us to manipulate Him by what we do (v4), we will be hard and demanding and uncaring with others.

**The nature and fruit of true religion, v6-12.** But the Lord has given us His worship and law generously, giving us that which is for good and for joy—to free us precisely from that sinful mindset that belongs to our natures (v6), and to turn around and be as merciful with others as God has been with us (v7).

What's the great difference between the two kinds of religion? One says, "look what great things I have done for God!" (v3). The other says, "look what great things God has done for me!" (v9a). Those who trust in the Lord and rejoice in His mercy and grace become those who are merciful and gracious with others (v7, v10). Their lives become abundant not by the impressiveness of their effort, but by the continual work of God's grace in them (v8, 11). And God uses them to bring life and healing and strength to others (v12). Isn't that what you would like, dear Christian? Which religion is yours?

**The means by which the Lord trains us in true religion, v13-14.** Now, what if we have discovered that our hearts are too much like the false religion and too little like the true religion? None of us appreciate God's goodness and generosity as much as we ought to. None of us are merciful and gracious to others as we ought to be.

Enter one of God's good and generous gifts: His Sabbath. There's a wonderful "If-then" in v13-14. It goes exactly opposite what many of us would expect. Apart from grace, we naturally approach Sabbath-keeping like Pharisees, thinking that good Sabbath keeping will show how much we delight in the Lord... we think that "If you delight yourself in the Lord, then you will turn your foot and call the Sabbath a delight."

However, our passage says exactly the opposite: "If you turn your foot and call the Sabbath a delight, then you will delight yourself in the Lord." In other words, every Sabbath is a heart-training day, a delight-training day. God has built into every single week a day that cures us just a little bit of the false religion, and grows us just a little bit in the true religion.

What are we to do on His holy day? Treat it as holy! In other words, treat it as His, not ours. There are particular places that He has for us to go (worship!), so we focus on going there instead of wherever else we would have wanted. There are particular pleasures (Him Himself in focused, direct fellowship) that He has for us to enjoy—pleasures that should obsolete and dwarf whatever else we would seek after. Even the type of conversations that we have are determined by the fact that it is His holy day.

We're so convinced that our natural desires and pleasures are the best, that we don't always feel like the Sabbath is a gift, but in moments when we don't feel it, we need to trust what Scripture says. That's a big part of the Christian life, isn't it? Doing what God says is best, even when it feels to us like it's not? There's already a joy in entrusting ourselves to His wisdom, and the love in which He has given His good commands. It is sweet to submit to the Savior, to yield ourselves to Him who loves our soul.

But it is more than that. There is a promise here, and thousands of years of believers have experienced God's faithfulness to that promise. The Lord teaches us that there is a mechanism here, and thousands of years of believers have experienced the truth of that teaching.

Oh, how delightful is the Lord, our life! Indeed, He makes us to ride on the heights. What is the heritage of Jacob our father? The Lord Himself is our inheritance! And every good and perfect gift that He provides in that relationship.

**How does weekly Lord's Day keeping turn you away from man-made religion to God-made religion?**

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us; for we have treated You as a cruel Master, whose Sabbath command rewards us for enduring misery. Forgive us, for our sinful view of You has resulted in our being demanding and cruel with others. Forgive us, for we have so often chosen our pleasure, rather than choosing Your pleasure. Forgive us, for we have not made good use of Your holy day, in which Your pleasures overwrite our own to train us in delight. Forgive us and conform us to Christ, by Your Spirit, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP92 "It's Good to Thank the Lord" or TPH151 "Lord of the Sabbath, Hear Us Pray"**

**(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](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Isaiah 58. These are God's words. 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 did righteousness. And did not forsake, the ordinance of their God, they asked of me the ordinances of Justice.

They take Delight in approaching God. Why have we fasted? They say and you have not seen Why have we Afflicted our souls? And you take no notice. 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. Is it a fast that I have chosen a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bull rush and to spread out sackcloth and Ashes.

Would you call this a fast? And an acceptable day unto Yahweh. 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. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?

And that you bring your house, bring to your house, the poor who work asked out When you see the naked that you cover him and not hide yourself from your own flesh, Then your light shall break forth like the morning. Your healing shall spring forth speedily and your righteousness shall go before you The glory of Yahweh, shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call and Yahweh will answer. You shall cry? Then he will say here, I am. If you take away the yolk from your mits, the pointing of the finger. And speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy The Afflicted Soul, Then your light shall Dawn in the darkness.

And your darkness shall be as the new day. Yahweh will guide you, continually and satisfy your soul and direct and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water. Whose Waters do not fail. Those from among you shall build up the old waste places.

He shall raise up the foundations of many generations. And you shall be called the repairer of the breach. The restorer of the streets to dwell on. 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 nor finding your own pleasure. Nor speaking your own words. Then you shall Delight yourself in Yahweh. And that will cause you to ride on the high heels of the earth. And feed you with the Heritage. Of Jacob, your father.

The mouth of Yahweh. Has spoken. Ximena sends this reading of God's inspired. And Aaron toward, Praise God for Those whom he actually calls and sends as preachers to his people. Because they're not like these dark dogs who do not bark. Uh, like we heard about last week. But when the Lord's people, Under illusions of peace and safety, and righteousness.

When indeed, their hearts are far from the Lord. Uh, what they need is not someone who speaks gently to them and reassuringly to them. What they need is. Someone who is the beginning of Isaiah 58, says cries aloud and spares not and lifts up his voice like a trumpet to tell God's people their transgression in the house of Jacob their sins.

This is often. The task of the preacher from the Lord because this is often the condition of God's people. And wood that it were not. And praise God. In this chapter. We have not just the telling of their sins but the reminder of God's remedy. So, their sin was not in failing to do religious externals.

They were keeping all of the different sabbaths in the Jewish calendar. The, the weekly Sabbath and The various High sabbaths the in the various feasts. The various fasts. But even while they were making a display of Desiring and eagerness to do what God Said, We're not taking their Delight in God himself.

And so, setting aside other things to give time to God for them. Was an Affliction. Why have we fasted? They say and you have not seen. Why have we Afflicted our souls? And you take no notice. So, they thought having to The vote time just to the Lord, just for religious, observance was this great big weight that they had to carry this burden.

This misery. And they. Uh, happy to make others miserable as well. In fact, even though they kept the externals, Of what God had commanded them. They were finding little ways to do what they wanted instead. In fact, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure. So, They found pleasure, not in God, but in other things, The fact that the the whole day was set apart to God, that was miserable.

But still their hearts were going after The other things that they desired. And they were, as hard Masters. To their laborers. As they perceived God, to be to them. So, verse 3 ends and exploit All your laborers. And so, rather than taking pleasure in God, They were striving with God, indeed.

You fast for Strife. They were debating with God which we just saw in verse 3. Why have we fasted? They say and you have not seen When they fasted it was to strike with the Fist of wickedness. They said you will not fast as you do this way to make your voice heard on high.

So, they viewed their religious exercises as a way to, to get from God what they wanted. And he said, don't you see that's like Balling your hand up into a fist and trying to strike God in heaven. To beat out of him, the stuff that you really want. Rather than to have him.

That's what you really want. This is a horrible view of God. He doesn't give us fast, he doesn't give us sabbaths, and especially now. Christ having come and taken his seat and the Throne of glory. And the Sabbath. Keeping that remains for his people, in which he assembles them and we're not to forsake that assembling Come to Heaven through him.

And gathered not only together here on Earth, but With the great joyous assembly and glory. So, we must not see. The fourth Commandment. The keeping of the Lord's Day is a burden. You must not must watch against. That desire in our heart to have some other pleasure than the Lord so long as we can justify the external action.

I do not doubt, sometimes that there are Uh, there is extra energy that needs to be burned off. By a child. But we don't use that as. Um, A crack. Uh, the Commandment that we can drive a semi truck through No, we Uh, Maybe run with them for a little bit or Uh, catechizing or whatever it is.

Maybe refreshing that which was from the morning service. We actually have. Don't we ahead of time? Not just the text, but even the teaching of the older server of the Uh, evening service. But there are very few who actually need that. In order to worship. Well, Uh, in in the evening service we mustn't.

Look for our Pleasures. And instead of looking to have pleasure in God, This is something for each of us. Um, but those who are youngest need the most help. And, Uh, we, we mustn't say, well, this is the only time that I get to socialize. We'll use the word Fellowship, but that's a utter nonsense.

Because worship is more Fellowship than socialization is If we're thinking biblically. If we're thinking properly, Uh, we mustn't seek our pleasure, we must Seek to have our hearts mind set on the Lord himself, enjoying him enjoying that. He is actually loosening the, the ropes in which we are tied up by our Our weakness, our finitude, our inability to focus on more things.

Um, So that when we are when we are doing our work even as we do it unto him and unto his glory, we're unable to give him the attention that we I wish we could and that we are more able to do in worship times. Uh, he's he's using the The Lord's day.

He's using the Sabbath to loosen the the tight ropes that are on us of our desire for other things and our Delight in other things. Our commitment to other things are devotion to other things. And so, that's what he says here. He says Is this a is it a fast that I have chosen a day for a man to afflict his soul to bow down his head like a bull Russian to spread out sackcloth and Ashes.

Would you call this a fast and an acceptable day to Yahweh? Is this not the fast that I have chosen to loose the bonds of wickedness so our sin binds us on the one hand we

don't Delighten him like we should Come to the Lord's day. We say, oh, thank you, Lord, for giving me this day.

When my lack of delighting in, you is exposed and or I could be trained to Delighten, you more. Thank you for losing from me. Untying from me, the bonds of my wickedness today. But not just the Bonds of wickedness, but also to undo. The heavy burdens.

The, the Things that I am yoked into. And have to do on the other days. Thank you. Lord for Giving me opportunity to worship you. All day. And so, it's a it's a day of gift. It's a day of freedom. Freedom from our Pleasures freedom from our duties. Freedom unto pleasure in him.

Freedom unto worshipping him. It's like a cheat code. Where you get to warp zone to the end. Where you are in heaven and you've been freed from From all of these other things. And get to be devoted entirely to him and one day a week you can you are commanded to use the cheat code.

And to Rejoice. Not to say, oh, I wish I was. Doing all that other stuff. When will the Sabbath be over? So that I can buy or sell when will the Sabbath be over so that I could just play.

Culture addicted to play? All the more difficult.

And then for then, They are also. Then to reflect the nature and character of their God. That on this day, which is given for worshipping him. They can bring the hungry and the cast out and the naked. To also participate in the worship of God. He's describing here something that is in the context of Israel's feast days where they had higher and lower ones.

And Um, When they were to treat the weekly Sabbath was a sort of feast day 2. How much more we When our Lord, our great high priest is on the throne of Glory already. But it was in the context of the feast day that gathered for feast. There are those who are hungry.

There are those who Uh had been otherwise, cast out. There are those who are naked. And their needs are attended to so that they too can worship God and take the light in him. And what a parable it is to That those who are gathered for the worship of God, are being generous with them, like God is How easy it is for them to see.

This is so that I may be a worshiper, too. I may have been. Uh, hungry or Forsaken or naked. But I too am a worshiper of God and welcomed into his assembly and they're attending to the things. That I need so that I can worship him. So, Verse 8 and 9 are not just reward but even consequence we can see how the nature of the instruction answers to the nature of the result.

Of course, God gives the result. He's the one who must bless it and it is reward. Uh, from his hand. Is, if you do this, Then your light shall break forth like the morning. You're healing shall spring forth. Speedily your righteousness shall go before you the glory of Yahweh.

Shall be your rear guard. So instead of the tribe of Judah going before you your righteousness, the righteousness of God counted for you goes, before you instead of the tribe of day end, being the rear guard. Glory of Yahweh, shall be your rear guard. So that order of procession that we saw in Numbers Chapter 10, How much greater in the order of the procession of your life?

If you have him as your delight and Hymn of your Str as your strength, you shall call and Yahweh will answer. You shall cry? He will say, here I am. If you take away the yolk from your Mets, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, So, each one trying to burn the others like, Uh, they thought that the Lord had burdened them.

Extend your soul to the hungry satisfy? The Afflicted, Soul? She's repeating now, isn't he? Uh, what we saw from the end of verse 6, through verse seven, Then your light shall Dawn in the darkness. Your Darkness shall be as the Noonday So right now they think they're doing really well.

But, They're not getting out of it. What they are trying to get from God. They have these other things that they think are the blessedness and God himself is the means to the end. Now if you know that if you know God is your blessedness then you get all the other things with him.

So you say your best moments now. Are going to be are worse than what, your worst moments would be. If the Lord was your Delight and if the Lord was your strength, if you didn't see a feast or a fast or a Sabbath, or a Lord's day, in our case, As a a burden or a misery.

But a blessing and a freeing. To spend a whole day worshipping him. Your worst days in that condition. Would be better than your best days are. Now, he says, Yahweh will guide you continually satisfy your soul and drought and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered Garden, like a spring of water, whose Waters do not fail.

All the other ways you could live, your life is like a garden that dries up. The moment a day of rain is messed. Is saying, but if you Delight in the Lord, If you Delight in his word meditate upon it day and night, then you shall be like a tree planted by streams of water Psalm 1 If God is your delight, and if God is your life, Then you have Delight in all circumstances.

Then you will be steady and peaceful and joyous, even in the midst of Affliction, even in the midst of trouble. Things that are right to be sad about, you'll be sad about things that are right to be angry about you'll be angry about but you won't have these ups and downs.

Where sadness or anger? Alter your own condition. Because you'll be like this watered Garden. With the Lord himself is your strength. This is true, not only individually for people but corporately. For God's people. Those especially who are Having him as their joy in him as their strength. For which is, we can see in a moment.

He is especially giving us the Sabbath. Uh, to train us in. Those who especially have him as their joy, in him as their strength, they will be the ones that he uses. To build up the waste places and raise up foundations and and start a virtuous cycle in which many generations, why many generations?

Well, because of what we saw in chapter 56 That there are no eunuchs on the Sabbath or no foreigners on the Sabbath. There is a generational transmission of delighting in God. And being strengthened in God for which the Lord's day was designed for, which the Sabbath was designed. And those who keep it.

Well, especially those who are older Have this opportunity to invest in the younger.

These shall be called repair of the breach and restore of streets to dwell in. So, how does the How does the Sabbath train us? And this delighting. And the strengthening. Well. Commanded. To turn away our foot. From doing our pleasure. Why? Because it's his holy day. But we don't have no pleasure.

We have a new pleasure and a better pleasure. So, he says, turn away your foot from doing your pleasure. And call the Sabbath of the light. Turn away your foot from doing that, which you consider weighty or honorable. And consider the holy day of Yahweh. Honorable. Honor him. Not doing your own ways nor finding your own pleasure nor speaking your own words, And what are we to discover?

When we turn our foot, from the ways of the other six days, And we walk in the ways of the Sabbath, which ones, which one are we to discover to be better? And more enjoyable and more refreshing, and more strengthening. Well, of course the worship. On the Lord's Day on the Sabbath.

Which are we to find more pleasurable? The pleasures that we More easily default to or the ones that are commanded on the Lord's day. Of course, God himself is the pleasure of the Lord's Day. It is much better. It's not wrong to be pleased with a good creation. Although we are to remember in all of our enjoying of the creation.

Our creator to remember him. But it's much better to enjoy the Creator himself directly. Nor speaking your own words. Which conversations? Should we find more enjoyable? And more refreshing. And, More endearing. Which conversations should we? Find increase our bond together. The ones that we can have over the stuff that we prefer to talk about.

Our work or whatever. We're planning on doing or whatever we saw here or there or whatever. That's sort of a conversation. Or a conversation. About the Lord himself. His trying Glory, the glory of each of the person says glory in all of his great and gracious acts the goodness of his word, things that he's taught us and showed us about himself, or ourselves, or our righteousness, or sin, and the mortifying of it and the evilness of it, or whatever it is from his word.

Shouldn't these be the things? The words. End of verse 13. That give joy and strength and That produce real Fellowship. So it says, if you follow this prescription, Then consequence and reward verse 14. You shalt Delight yourself in Yahweh. And I he says, Yahweh says Will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth.

Okay, so he's gonna bless us in every Earthly way. But there's something even greater than that. And Feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father. And the greatest part of that Heritage, the greatest part of that inheritance, is when God says, I will be your God and you will be my people.

God himself is the heritage of Jacob. God himself in Christ. Now we know God himself in Christ, is Our great inheritance. Praise God. Hope to be able to leave to our children. Something of what is in this world for their use and for their comfort for their preservation for their service of God and their service of others.

But what God leaves to us is himself. And how sure is this? Into verse 14, the mouth of Yahweh has spoken. This isn't coming from. The dogs who don't bark. This is coming from the one. Who cries aloud spares. Not tell my people. Uh, lifts up his voice like a trumpet tells God's people their transgressions in the house of Jacob, their sins.

He speaks from Yahweh. But he doesn't just speak from Yahweh. When he gives correction, he speaks from Yahweh when he gives instruction and comfort and promise. The Lord himself. Makes us these promises. And he does. So, Incalculable, kindness and generosity and goodness. Lest we continue to be bound by the idea.

That it's miserable to belong to him and that his commands are burdensome to be carried. Rather than designed for our life and our joy, and our strength. Let's pray. Ask him to bless this part of his word to us. Our Father in Heaven. Please help us to take our delighting, you And we do.

Thank you. For the one Feast that Christ instituted. In the gospel age under him. And we pray that you would bless us. Yes, and Morning and evening, worship times. In the But also and especially so. In the Lord's day and its assemblies. That we might learn to take our Delight in you.

That we might view, you rightly and be loosed. From the bonds of our wickedness, and From our heavy Yokes. We pray for the rest of this day. That you would give us to ride on the high hills of the earth. And to have you as our heritage. Even though we must necessarily be distracted to some extent by other tasks.

Do not let us lose the mindset. Of offering to you and thankfulness to you. The rotor shape, even Our six days of work. For, we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.