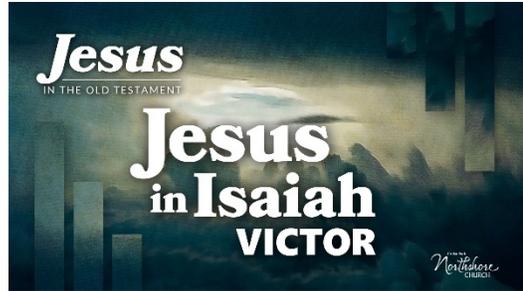


Jesus in Isaiah: Victor

We've been in a 10-part series that started in February (remember February... back when we could all move about freely, eat in restaurants and get our hair cut... could 2020 be the only year in Seattle when dreary-February is the favorite month?). The self-explanatory title is *Jesus in the Old Testament*. Today will be the final installment, message number 10. We are back in Isaiah and we will see Jesus as Victor.



There is a long list of good reasons for the series; among them are:

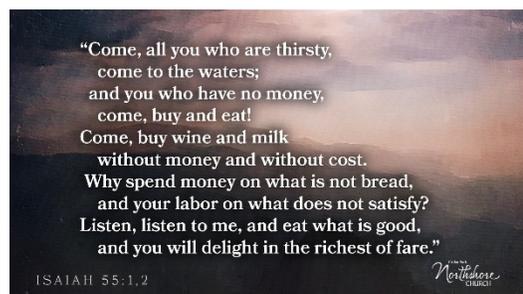
- It is good to study the Bible that Jesus studied, so it is good to be in the Old Testament.
- We see that God had a plan from the beginning.
- Jesus fulfills that plan of God.
- By studying the promises about Jesus in the Old Testament, we get to know Jesus better.

That is especially true of today's passages, because today's passages include Jesus as the final victor... the eternal King in this age and beyond this age.

We'll look to three passages today, verses that happen to be the first few verses of three different chapters: 55, 61, and 63.

First to Isaiah 55:

"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.¹



¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 55:1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

We can ask ourselves, is this a picture of the **already**, or the **not yet**?

If we take it metaphorically, it is **already**, in the case of the Messiah, Jesus Our Savior. Jesus described Himself as Living Water... not water that merely quenches literal thirst, but the thirst of our souls. Jesus described Himself as the Bread of Life, even ordaining bread to represent His broken Body in Communion. So, this promise of Jesus is, already, fulfilled in this way.

And I'm confident that this describes the **not yet** too... eternity with and through our Savior where we will feast on and from the goodness of God forever. That isn't the way it is now, somebody has to pay... but there will be a day, an eternity with no scarcity or hunger.

you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.²

I was working through this passage Thursday morning, and this particular notion seemed familiar to me. Of course the Scripture was familiar to me (this is my job)... but what I mean is that such a scene was playing out on the news. Milk, and bread, and wine without cost... free for the taking... that was part of what was playing out in the new and mysterious land of CHAZ (the so-called Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone). The co-ops with **free** food and drink (and smoke too) were not all that was going on down there, not even the main thing, but it was part of what I was seeing on the news.

And then I thought "isn't this, promised in Isaiah, what they are looking for? Isn't it what we all are looking for?"

Pardon me if it sounds too trite and simplistic, but Jesus is the answer to every human longing... especially the human longings that come from suffering and injustice.

We ought to understand the cries for justice and equality, the cries of knowing people matter, even the cries for resources. These are the kinds of things everyone needs.

² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 55:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

But, as we humans do, it seems that most are heading in the wrong direction; they are not heading toward Jesus.

So I asked a question, first just in my inner voice, and then out loud (and by out loud I mean on Facebook): What would it take to be a missionary to CHAZ? I think most thought I was joking... which is reasonable because I think of Facebook primarily as a place to joke around and be lighthearted. But, this time, it was a serious question.

I know that I'm right, that the people in CHAZ (Chazites? Chazians?) need Jesus, desperately. But it seems that they are a long way away from Jesus and it might be pretty hard to reach them.

Seriously... what would it take to be a missionary to CHAZ?

There is no Assemblies of God program to give to CHAZ, no appointed missionaries with Chazian expertise and inroads. What would it take?

I suppose I could go down there and start preaching... but I don't think that would get me anywhere. Sometimes such tactics do more harm than good. I know there are effective street preachers, but most I have seen are knuckleheads... rude and ineffective.

It seemed that I needed to do my research... so I started where we start these days, Googling stuff, mostly news stories. But what I saw and heard didn't make sense. A lot of it didn't line up with what I know about the area and people, and a lot of the news stories contradicted each other.

So, I thought I'd go see for myself. And then I thought, don't be ridiculous. And then it nagged at me in the sort of way that I recognized as the Holy Spirit. So, I went.

I would have taken the bus, but with stinkin' COVID and all, I drove. Parking was a hassle, but parking is always a hassle on Capitol Hill.

There were reports of armed checkpoints and restriction of movement. I saw none of that. It was easier than normal to walk around since there was no traffic and no need to bother with street signals. There were no guns visible, which included no police (although I'm confident there were non-uniformed police around). I did see police outside of the zone, but not in any sort of regiment or blockade.

You might think that I didn't fit in... but there were lots of folk who seemed to be tourists to CHAZ like me, and there were lots of reporters (some of the old variety, many of the new blogger-type variety). I didn't stick out. Never felt threatened or unsafe.

I saw them painting the black lives matter mural on the street.

By the way, allow me to comment on that. Several have voiced concerns over support of the Black Lives Matter movement because of various stances taken on socialism, defunding police, abortion, violence and such. You can stop sending me articles about the Black Lives Matter movement; I get it, I always have. Nevertheless, of course, **black lives absolutely matter**.

This happens all the time. Groups capture something good and *twist it* for their purposes. As an example... guess what, I think it is good to plan for parenthood. Wouldn't you agree? Planning for parenthood, getting educated for parenthood, being financially prepared for parenthood, all of these kinds of things are really good and should be promoted. But I am not at all in favor, of course, of the Planned Parenthood organization. Just because they have coopted a good phrase for their purposes does not force me to become an advocate of unplanned parenthood.

Same goes for rainbows. I like rainbows. Rainbows are theologically significant to me since it is a sign of God's promise. I'm not going to give up on my love of rainbows because some political organizations have coopted rainbows as their symbol.

So it is with affirming that black lives absolutely matter. You won't see me carelessly using the phrase or even the hashtag out of caution about the organization... but of course, black lives matter.

I heard from some of the folks painting the mural. They weren't painting to overthrow the government or abolish capitalism; they were painting because they felt like black lives didn't matter, for a long time, to a lot of people, in many systems... but they had hope that people were noticing and listening this time.

I'm generally a rule follower. And I would have preferred that they got a permit first (which they would have gotten in Seattle, the mayor would have likely funded the whole thing). But I can overlook this code infraction.

I saw the now-famous abandoned police precinct. I saw it vandalized, actually saw it being further vandalized (and I saw at least one police officer through the window... so it wasn't completely abandoned, at least not on Thursday afternoon). The site of it gave me no joy; it was sad. And I was most angry that whoever gave the order walked away. I understand the urge to deescalate the situation, but abandoning the precinct is resulting in potential harm to others, and the protestors themselves.

I saw the talking circles. Lots of them of a variety of sizes. And I listened. Some of what I heard was misguided and impractical. But a lot of what I heard just reaffirmed what I had already thought... that there was pain, suffering and hopelessness... and that the protesting gave them some hope.

I think there is a mix of *true hope* and *false hope*. Protests, especially when it comes to civil rights, **do** result in change. From Boston Tea Parties to Women's Suffrage to Equal Rights, protests offer hope for change founded in history. Sometimes they work.

But there was false hope too... because the true longing for justice, the true longing for provision, the true longing to matter... that can only be satisfied by Jesus. Locking down a half-dozen city blocks and a park aren't likely getting them any closer to Jesus.

I walked back to my car and thought a few people might be interested in a quick report, so I propped my phone on the dashboard and turned on Facebook Live. Like I said, I thought a *few* people might be interested. You often hear me say *like, share, and comment* on these livestreams... well people liked, shared, and commented, and it when *sorta* viral (small v) with over 1,200 views so far. Most of the comments were positive; but not all.

You can't see most of the negative comments because most came to me directly, and I deleted the ones on my feed (I delete stuff that people say on my Facebook page all the time, it is my autonomous zone. If you want to say rude or mean or weird stuff, say it on your own page. I also have a policy that I'm the only one that gets to *preach* on my page. So if you've had something deleted by me, don't take it too personally).

Some think I am too easy on the protestors, giving them a pass. Others think I am too easy on the police, giving them a pass.

Some are certain that I've gone liberal. *Please* people... if you think I've gone liberal you don't know me very well.

I wasn't there to adopt or support a political position, nor was I there to support anyone's tactics. I was there because I truly care about people. I care about the protestors (and I care about the police and the residents and the business owners too).

I'm serious about this question: What will it take to be a missionary to CHAZ? And I don't know... but I do know that real efforts in listening and understanding are first.

A lot of the feedback I received disagreed. There was a steady stream of ***first things first*** messages. First clean up their act. First act right. First abide by the rules. First be civil... ***then*** perhaps we'll listen and try to understand and make some changes.

I sure am glad that Jesus didn't treat me like that. I'm glad I didn't have to get my act together ***first***.

And, furthermore, playing by our rules has failed a significant part of our population, people that matter. These people aren't to be treated like enemies or children. I'm concerned about the hyped-up reporting. We often call the devil the enemy... and our enemy likes company; our enemy wants us to have a lot of enemies. The devil wins if we think of these people as enemies, as somehow less-than, deserving of whatever their plight is now or whatever it might be in the future. When we paint all protestors in the hue of the bad behavior of a few we make the same mistake that others make by painting all police officers in the hue of the bad behavior of a few.

We have made significant progress against racism over the decades, but we have farther to go, and the next steps up a mountain like this are harder steps.

My main interest, as a pastor in an increasingly urban community that borders the City, is in souls... in proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

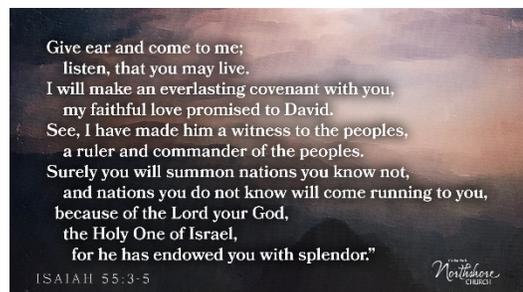
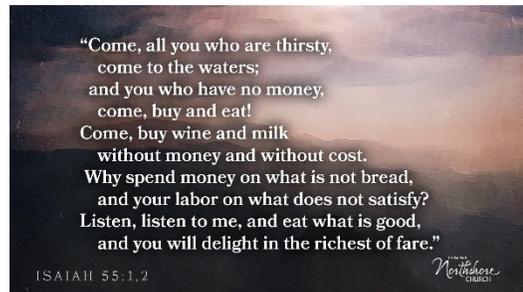
I'm serious about this question: What will it take to be a missionary to CHAZ? And I don't know... but I do know that real efforts in listening and understanding are first. Nobody will listen to me and try to understand where I am coming from if I am not willing to listen and try to understand where they are coming from. I can't do the best job of presenting the

Gospel, either in word or action, if I am ignorant about their perspectives, needs and suffering.

We start with love and respect. Love and respect for a police officer comes easily to me, and so it is with love and respect for business owners and such. But I have **work** to do to truly love and respect the typical protestor in CHAZ. I suspect a lot of people like me have a lot of work to do.

“Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.
⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples



The Gospel is in there... in that the abundance we receive is without cost; we can't buy it. It cost God, and our worship of and service to God might be costly... but our salvation was free to us.

Here in Isaiah 55 we find the promised Messiah, a ruler and commander of the peoples.

Verse 5 says:

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor.” ³

³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 55:1–5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

That is both *already* and not yet... a **now** thing, and thing for eternity. For eternity:

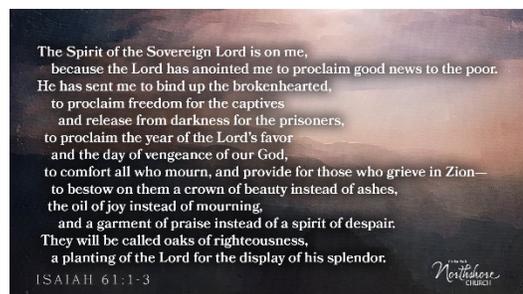
at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. ⁴

Not just a chosen obscure nation, but **all** people, from every tongue and nation.

It is an *already* thing too, a *now* thing that involves us who believe. We are to be proclaiming the Gospel to all nations, even *pretend nations* like CHAZ.

You might recognize something familiar in the final two passages. Here is Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor ⁵



That might be familiar because I have referred to it often in the other series we have going from the Gospel of Luke. Jesus read this, from Isaiah 61, as His mission statement. But He stopped there; Jesus did not go on to say:

and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor. ⁶

⁴ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Php 2:10–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 61:1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 61:2–3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

I think Jesus left that part unsaid because that part was left to be fulfilled by His second and final coming, inaugurating eternity.

His earthly ministry 2,000 years ago was not about vengeance.

And an eternal crown of beauty (may I suggest resurrected bodies) instead of ashes is *not yet*. This is *not yet* the eternal time of joy and praise.

But vengeance is sure... and that is promised in Isaiah 63:

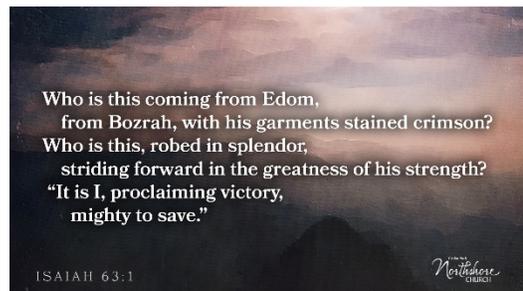
Who is this coming from Edom,
from Bozrah, with his garments stained
crimson?

Who is this, robed in splendor,
striding forward in the greatness of his
strength?

“It is I, proclaiming victory,
mighty to save.”

² Why are your garments red,
like those of one treading the winepress?

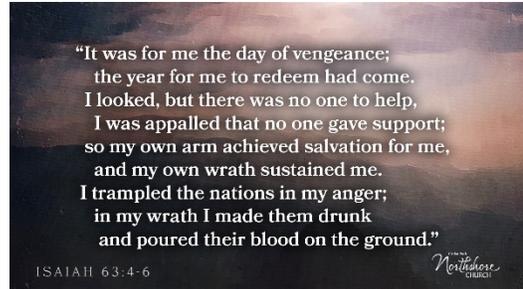
³ “I have trodden the winepress alone;
from the nations no one was with me.
I trampled them in my anger
and trod them down in my wrath;
their blood spattered my garments,
and I stained all my clothing.



Sound familiar? It is some of the text behind the Battle Hymn of the Republic, written in the Civil War era in support of the Union Army’s work to end slavery. I’m not all that crazy about the theology of the song... but it has become part of our American cultural fabric. It isn’t very careful about aligning with the Biblical text... but there is enough cut from the text that it sounds familiar.

The corollary, New Testament text is in Revelation 19, the apocalyptic picture of Jesus, on a white horse. He is the one who’s name is Faithful and True. It is a picture of the Messiah’s final victory over evil.

⁴ It was for me the day of vengeance;
the year for me to redeem had come.
⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help,
I was appalled that no one gave support;
so my own arm achieved salvation for me,
and my own wrath sustained me.
⁶ I trampled the nations in my anger;
in my wrath I made them drunk
and poured their blood on the ground.” ⁷



This final vengeance is the **Lord's**. It puts me in mind of Romans 12.

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," ⁿ says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ^o

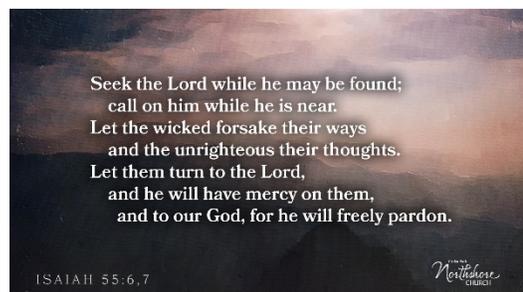
²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. ⁸

In that great, end-times day, the One on the White Horse whose name is Faithful and True will righteously overcome all evil by His sword. Until that day, it is ours to overcome evil with good. And nothing is as good as the Gospel.

Such a day of righteous vengeance is good news for some, and terrible news for others. Right? There is God's side, and the vanquished side.

To wrap things up, let's jump back to Isaiah 55, because it so plainly calls us to action. Picking up with verse 6 it reads:

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.
⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy
on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ⁹



⁷ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 63:1–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁸ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Ro 12:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Is 55:6–7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

It is theologically interesting to think in terms of what is *already* and *not yet*... but practically, what matters most is **now**.

Now is the time to “seek the Lord while he may be found.”

Friend, if you don't yet believe, “seek the Lord”... right now.

Turn around. Turn to Jesus.

This is, of course, a call for all of us, to “seek the Lord.” We all should search our hearts, responding to the Holy Spirit, forsaking wicked and unrighteous ways.

When we seek the Lord like this, when we turn to Him, we can trust His promise: he will have mercy, he will freely pardon.

Furthermore, we who believe, who bear the responsibility of responding to the Great Commission, to proclaim the Gospel, be reminded that the stakes are high and the time is now.

There is a longing in every heart to matter. A longing for justice. A longing for righteousness. A longing for help, care, and safety. A longing for a savior. And we are called to lead people to the Way, to lead people to Jesus... to seek the Lord while he may be found.

Let's commit ourselves, again, to that Great Calling today in prayer.

Father, we are grateful to be Yours, to be called to Your side, to be in Your care. Help us, again, to turn from our wicked ways, our unrighteousness. Holy Spirit, convict us of sin. Father we confess our weakness. Son of God we thank You for the Way you have provided. We believe.

And for those who do not yet believe, for those searching for answers only you can provide, give us gifts to do our part. Help us to listen, and see, and understand. Give us gifts of compassion. Provide wisdom that leads to solutions. We who bear Your name want to demonstrate Your love and power, especially in desperate situations. Give us gifts of courage for the task. We pray in the Name of the Victor, Jesus. Amen.