



Sermon, Sunday February 26, 2023 “The Command of God”

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 55:6-9 ⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Introduction: God Calling Us to the Place of Worship and Repentance

This year, Lent began on Ash Wednesday, the 22nd. The etymological meaning of Lent is 'revival of all things'. This means that as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we are led into the living of life, just as the creatures of nature that have shrunk during the winter are rejuvenated in the spring.

Today's text from Isaiah shows the merciful and gracious love of God who calls us to worship and repentance. Also, the text reminds us of the merciful father who forgave the prodigal son and gave unconditional love in the Gospels of the New Testament.

By the way, what we must not forget is that we must respond to God's command. We can go out as children of grace through obedience to God's calling. God tells us in today's text that we should; “Seek, Call, throw away, Come back”. In the first week of Lent, I hope you will deeply meditate on the word of the Lord given to us.

Body: The God’s Commands

The Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament is divided into 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Isaiah. Among them, today's text is the second Isaiah (Isaiah 44-55). The second book of Isaiah relates to the Babylonian captivity of about 50 years, from about 587-538 BCE. Among the Jews taken to Babylon, more and more people lose their identity as God's chosen people. In this situation, the prophet Isaiah proclaims the Israelites to return to God. It is a call to repentance to restore their identity as God's holy people.

In today's text, the prophet Isaiah prophesies four commands for the Jewish people who have lost their identity as God's people.

1. Seek the LORD while he may be found

First, it is commanded to **"Seek the LORD while he may be found."** In the Old Testament, **Ecclesiastes 3:1**, **“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”** As the words of Ecclesiastes say, it is very important to find a time to meet God in your life of faith.

The Israelites gave up their identity of serving only God as the period of captivity in Babylon lengthened and the hope of returning to their homeland disappeared. However, through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us to seek God when we think that the trends of the world (power, honor, money) depend on more compared to God's word of promise. These words of the prophet Isaiah are a very big lesson for our life of faith.



Prophet Isaiah's words to seek the Lord mean that, when the darkness is greater, the light that comes during darkness is stronger.

Dear brothers and sisters! If we are during hardship, please remember that we can meet God deeply at that time. So what is God's second commandment?

2. Come back as the holy people of God!

Second, God commands us to return to the holy people of God. This command means to restore the essence of faith to us. We know of an incident in which Jesus was tested in the wilderness for 40 days before he began his public ministry. We have the confidence that we can protect the essence of faith through the example of Jesus who overcame the test in the wilderness. Jesus overcame the weaknesses of human nature with the power of the Word of God the Father and the help of the Holy Spirit. Please do not forget that what enables us to overcome trials and temptations and live as God's holy people is not our efforts or will, but the power of the Holy Spirit given through a deep relationship with the Lord.

Therefore, if you want to restore the holiness within us during Lent, please move on to a deeper relationship with the Lord. During the season of Lent, pray, read the Word, fast, meditate, and do good deeds toward your neighbors for a deeper relationship with the Lord. So what is God's third commandment?

3. Call upon him while he is near!

Third, God commands us to call upon Him while He is near. When people are in trouble, they seek help from others. By the way, the God demands two things from us during suffering. The first is humility, recognizing our limitations. In fact, those who consider themselves good and righteous cannot recognize their own limitations. Also, arrogant people experience failure when they are overconfident in their abilities. Second, the God asks who we are asking for help. The God wants us to ask Him for help rather than worldly power, money, and fame.

By the way, if we do not trust in God and have no confidence in Him, we do not call upon the name of the God. Now I ask you. Do you call upon the name of the Lord when you are in trouble? Or do you seek and find something else? May we all be able to seek and call upon the name of the Lord. So what is God's fourth commandment?

4. Let the forsake wicked way, and the unrighteous thought!

Fourth, God commands us to let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thought. The first thing we must do to return to God is to forsake our evil ways and unrighteous thoughts. God requires us to repent. We can see why repentance is important in our lives through the words of the Bible.

The Bible, the word of God's revelation, tells us that the worldly trend and the path of faith serving only God cannot coexist. A Christian cannot serve both God and the idols of the world. We must choose one of the two. Then what are the ways of the wicked and unrighteous thoughts?

It is the idea that we can go the way of God and the way of the world together. Also, it is the heart that we can compromise with the world and live in moderation. And, rather than following God's will, we think it's okay to live according to worldly knowledge, experience, and instincts. Furthermore, it is the desire to use God as a tool to meet the needs of our lives.

Please remember. In today's text, **Isaiah 55:8, God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways."**



Humans often talk about God's will to satisfy our greed, but we cannot fully know God's will. Only the Lord clearly knows His will. So, we must carefully put our lives before God and seek the guidance of the Lord. At that moment, our ego disappears, and the will of the Lord remains in its place. The closer we come to the will of the Lord, the more tolerance and love will remain in our hearts. May we have the strength and courage to honestly reveal our hearts before the Lord. If it is not right before the Lord, we must repent without exception.

Conclusion: I hope you will come before him with a heart that fears God.

Now let's summarize today's message. Lent begins with repentance. When we repent to God, all possibilities for restoration of holiness open. God commands us to "Seek, Call, throw away, Come back." And when we obey the Word, we will experience a gracious and merciful God.

During the season of Lent, I hope that you will come before the living God with a heart of awe and a heart of mourning.

