

God's Amazing Grace

Breaking Forth
Like the Dawn

Isaiah 58:1-14

Naaman's Story

- » A story of radical grace
- » Our response is never to be one of presumption

Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Isaiah 58:1

1. *The Prophet's Call & Dialogue with Israel*

Isaiah 58:1-5

'Announce to my people'

- » God urges Isaiah to proclaim – 'shout out' boldly, 'lift your voice like a trumpet' (Shofar), announce to 'my people', speak of their rebellion & sin
- » A word of both grace and demand

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practised righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God.

Isaiah 58:2

The people believe they are already seeking God.

- » Key words: 'day after day they seek me', 'as if'
- » They are going through a worship routine but not with a sincere heart

'Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?' Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers.

Isaiah 58:3

Fasting

The prophet uses the example of fasting to demonstrate their disconnect from God (v3-5).

- » The people feel that God is not rewarding them for their fasting
- » They are thinking of it like a business contract with God (v3)

God's response

- » You are serving your own self-interest (v3)
- » You quarrel & fight
- » You oppress others
- » Is this the fast I desire? (v3-5)

The people are serving their own true interests.

- » 'Interest' (v3), 2x 'interests' (v13), 'own affairs' (v13b)
- » It raises the question:
What is our true passion?
- our careers, success, comfort
or God's kingdom?

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice, to
undo the thongs of the yoke, to let
the oppressed go free, and to break
every yoke? Is it not to share your
bread with the hungry, and bring the
homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover
them, and not to hide yourself from
your own kin?

Isaiah 58:3

II. God Desires a Heart for Justice & Compassion

Isaiah 58:6-7

God's Desired Fast

- » A fast that works against oppression (v6)
- » That desires the fundamental needs of people be met: food, shelter, clothing (v7)
- » To see your fellow citizens as 'your own kin' (v7b), embrace the other, demonstrate true compassion

III. God's Promise of Grace

Isaiah 58:8-12

Then you shall call,
and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help,
and he will say, Here I am.

Isaiah 58:9a

I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am', to a nation that did not call on my name.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Isaiah 65:1 & 24

Israel needs to demonstrate a heart of love.

- » Your words and actions (v9b)
- » Meet the basic needs of others (v10)
- » A 'costly grace' not a 'cheap grace'

Then...

- » 'Your light will shine' (v8,10)
- » 'Your healing will take place' (v8)
- » Metaphors of both water (v11) & reconstruction (v12) are employed to show God's promises fulfilled
- » You will know 'true delight' and experience 'God's abundance' (v14)

IV. Going Forward

The spirit of this text is embraced by Jesus in his first sermon – Luke 4:18 (taken from Isaiah 61:1-3)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,"

The Problem

It is not that the people are unreligious but that they are hyper-correct.

- » They are committed to outward form (fasting, Sabbath keeping) but miss the true heart of the spiritual disciplines

Authentic personhood is not obsessed with self-preoccupation but is concerned for the welfare of others.

- » Jesus' words – Matthew 25:31-46
- » Prophets' words – Micah 6:6-8, Amos 5:21-24
- » It's not just about our interests

Isaiah is cautioning us against the attitude of presumption with God

- » God desires true dependence which is always met with the response of grace

Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer