

## ***Isaiah 1***

**1** The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

### **The Wickedness of Judah**

**2**

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;

for the Lord has spoken:

“Children<sup>[a]</sup> have I reared and brought up,

but they have rebelled against me.

**3**

The ox knows its owner,

and the donkey its master's crib,

but Israel does not know,

my people do not understand.”

**4**

Ah, sinful nation,

a people laden with iniquity,

offspring of evildoers,

children who deal corruptly!

They have forsaken the Lord,

they have despised the Holy One of Israel,

they are utterly estranged.

**5**

Why will you still be struck down?

Why will you continue to rebel?

The whole head is sick,

and the whole heart faint.

**6**

From the sole of the foot even to the head,

there is no soundness in it,

but bruises and sores

and raw wounds;

they are not pressed out or bound up

or softened with oil.

**7**

Your country lies desolate;

your cities are burned with fire;

in your very presence

foreigners devour your land;

it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

**8**

And the daughter of Zion is left

like a booth in a vineyard,

like a lodge in a cucumber field,

like a besieged city.

**9**

If the Lord of hosts

had not left us a few survivors,  
we should have been like Sodom,  
and become like Gomorrah.

**10**

Hear the word of the Lord,  
you rulers of Sodom!  
Give ear to the teaching<sup>[b]</sup> of our God,  
you people of Gomorrah!

**11**

“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?  
says the Lord;  
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
and the fat of well-fed beasts;  
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,  
or of lambs, or of goats.

**12**

“When you come to appear before me,  
who has required of you  
this trampling of my courts?

**13**

Bring no more vain offerings;  
incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—

I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

**14**

Your new moons and your appointed feasts

my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me;

I am weary of bearing them.

**15**

When you spread out your hands,

I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers,

I will not listen;

your hands are full of blood.

**16**

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,

**17**

learn to do good;

seek justice,

correct oppression;

bring justice to the fatherless,

plead the widow's cause.

**18**

“Come now, let us reason<sup>[c]</sup> together, says the Lord:

though your sins are like scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow;

though they are red like crimson,

they shall become like wool.

**19**

If you are willing and obedient,

you shall eat the good of the land;

**20**

but if you refuse and rebel,

you shall be eaten by the sword;

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

### **The Unfaithful City**

**21**

How the faithful city

has become a whore,<sup>[d]</sup>

she who was full of justice!

Righteousness lodged in her,

but now murderers.

**22**

Your silver has become dross,

your best wine mixed with water.

**23**

Your princes are rebels

and companions of thieves.

Everyone loves a bribe

and runs after gifts.

They do not bring justice to the fatherless,

and the widow's cause does not come to them.

**24**

Therefore the Lord declares,

the Lord of hosts,

the Mighty One of Israel:

“Ah, I will get relief from my enemies

and avenge myself on my foes.

**25**

I will turn my hand against you

and will smelt away your dross as with lye

and remove all your alloy.

**26**

And I will restore your judges as at the first,

and your counselors as at the beginning.

Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness,

the faithful city.”

**27**

Zion shall be redeemed by justice,  
and those in her who repent, by righteousness.

**28**

But rebels and sinners shall be broken together,  
and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

**29**

For they<sup>[e]</sup> shall be ashamed of the oaks  
that you desired;  
and you shall blush for the gardens  
that you have chosen.

**30**

For you shall be like an oak  
whose leaf withers,  
and like a garden without water.

**31**

And the strong shall become tinder,  
and his work a spark,  
and both of them shall burn together,  
with none to quench them.

I still remember the day where my family went to the animal shelter where we first met Bambi, my now senior dog. I love her dearly and when I lived at home, I would do so much to take care of her - I feed her, wash her, walk her, clean up her poop, etc.) It's a lot of work but it all felt worth it because of how much I loved her - and how much she loved me! When I would come home from college, she would do zoomies around the house and attack me with lots of wagging tails and kisses. A dog is a man's best

friend... or so I thought. Whenever a stranger would come over to my house, Bambi would immediately turn all of her attention and affection towards them instead of me! All of a sudden, I was invisible to her - all the love that she gave me my whole life flung out the window as soon as our guest's car pulled up into the driveway. She would even disobey some of the commands I taught her - things that she would do perfectly when it was just us two, she would suddenly refuse to adhere to it because she was just too focused on the new people in the room. My friends would always joke that my own dog liked them better than me. But she is *my* dog! She's supposed to listen to me! How silly.

In today's passage, God gives the prophet Isaiah a vision and speaks of how His people, the Israelites, rejected Him as their master. They had a rebellious spirit and were corrupted, unable to see the goodness of God. As we've read this morning, the consequence of being without God is not light... Yet He graciously gives the Israelites, and in turn, us, a way out.

In V18 he says, "Come now, let us reason together... though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." There is an invitation to come. We now know that it was through Jesus that our sins would be forgiven - but the step to get there is to come.

Going back to my dog, after the guests would leave, she would then come to me and want to be held or snuggled. Although she would spend the whole day ignoring me, she always came back and returned to being my "best friend" again. It's not like I carried a grudge against her. I never said, "No, Bambi! No pets for you today because you ignored me!" I never withheld treats or evening walks because of her behavior. I always welcomed her coming back to me and was happy to see her tail wagging in my arms. This is just a light and somewhat silly illustration but God's heart is similar - all he wants is for you to take the first step and simply come.

So what about you? How have you been walking in your relationship with God? Are there any areas of your life where you have strayed away from him? Let us draw near to Him today.

Let's pray.

Jesus, we thank you that because of you, our crimson stains are made white as snow. It's not because of what we did but in our undeserving ways, you still chose to love us. You never retracted your love or promises, but the invitation that you gave the Israelites to come to you has always been there. So Father, may we come to you in thanksgiving, in worship, in humility. In Jesus' name, amen.