

Isaiah 33:1-10 (NKJV)

¹ Woe to you who plunder, though you *have not been* plundered; And you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, You will be plundered; When you make an end of dealing treacherously, They will deal treacherously with you.

² O LORD, be gracious to us; We have waited for You. Be their arm every morning, Our salvation also in the time of trouble.

³ At the noise of the tumult the people shall flee; When You lift Yourself up, the nations shall be scattered;

⁴ And Your plunder shall be gathered *Like* the gathering of the caterpillar; As the running to and fro of locusts, He shall run upon them.

⁵ The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

⁶ Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, *And* the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD *is* His treasure.

⁷ Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside, The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

⁸ The highways lie waste, The traveling man ceases. He has broken the covenant, He has despised the cities, He regards no man.

⁹ The earth mourns *and* languishes, Lebanon is shamed *and* shriveled; Sharon is like a wilderness, And Bashan and Carmel shake off *their* fruits.

¹⁰ "Now I will rise," says the LORD; "Now I will be exalted, Now I will lift Myself up.

Have you ever turned to God only after nothing else you tried worked out? Have you ever tried **your way** to **make yourself happy** over and over again, but all it brought was sorrow and frustration? Have you ever trusted **your own plans**, your own way of handling your life, only to come to the end of it finding yourself eating from the figurative pig feed in the pig pen?

Maybe right now you are choosing a path that you know God does not endorse, but you think it will pay off well for you.

This text is for you.

This is the historical setting for our text.

Judah was being threatened by Assyria. By all human reasoning Assyria was an undefeatable opponent. God has promised to protect Judah if they would trust Him, if they would call on Him, if they would depend upon Him. He had

promised over and over again to give them everything that they needed. But that was just **spiritual** talk to the leaders. That was religion. This was **real life**. So Judah sent to Egypt for help. But the Egypt connection had failed to come through for them. The smart alternative in the flesh failed to pan out. OK. Well the Judeans are resourceful people. They think they can still handle this on their own. So what they do is found in 2 Kings 18:13-16. They strip the temple of its wealth. They take money from the temple treasury and strip the gold from the doors. And they sent this tribute to the Assyrians to buy them off.

We need to think about this. Whose **money** was this? Whose **temple** was it? Wasn't this **God's** temple? So who is left footing the bill for this treachery? **God**. Does that not seem ironic to you?

These people have followed their own advice. They have taken their own path. They have spent those things **which were God's** in order to have what it is they were after. We rightfully recoil in horror. And then we look at our lives. Have we not all done the same thing.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

This first Corinthians passage is talking about sexual immorality, but the concept is not limited to that. We are not our own. We do not have a right to use our bodies or our minds or our talents as we see fit. They are not even ours. They are God's. And when we use any of this to pursue **our own plans**, apart from our faithful submission to God, we are guilty of the same things these Judeans did when they carted the riches from God's temple out to buy off the Assyrians. We share the same guilt.

So after the Judeans shipped the riches from the temple to buy off their enemies, they watch. The carts of riches arrive. They watch. All their enemies are encamped on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The leaders watch to see signs of them breaking camp and preparing to leave. But that is not what they see. Pretty soon they realize what they have done. They have squandered God's resources on nothing. They have invested in a Ponzi scheme that is only effective in turning one person's hard earned money into another person's easy earned money.

Using God's resources to buy from the devil what only God can provide is always a Ponzi scheme. It is always a waste of time and resources. It will never provide what it promises. All it will accomplish is showing God, and sometimes ourselves, that we do not have faith in Him to deliver upon His promises. It only succeeds in showing God that at the end of the day we think we are smarter than Him. And we will always be left without resources we squandered and without the thing we had hoped to buy.

Now after the Judeans had called on Egypt, and that had failed, and after they had tried to buy off the Assyrians, and that had failed, now they get serious with God.

Does that not look like our lives at times? It was only after years of failure at trying our way of doing things that we ever get to the place where we say, "I give up. My way does not work. I have squandered those things that were valuable to secure nothing of value. I have used what was God's to gain nothing for myself or God." At that point, it isn't that we really want to. It isn't that we are enthusiastic about the prospect. It is simply that we see that we have no other options. This is when we say, I surrender Lord. I will trust you in this area of my life. I want the misery to go away. And I am left with only you. If you cannot or will not do this, I am lost.

Maybe there are people who live such wonderful Christian lives that they never get to this point. God certainly deserves people like that. He is worthy to be worshipped the first day and every day. But that is not how it is for most of us, or even most of the Biblical heroes. Most of them **failed** their way to success. I hope this morning we see that **we do well to give up immediately**. I hope we see that to turn to Christ in trust and surrender from the beginning is the smart course. And if we are already on a course of rebellion, of self seeking satisfaction, I pray that we surrender now. It is going nowhere fast. But our example this morning is not that. Our example this morning is a people who only gave up when there was no other alternative.

I want to read a confession of another person who had the same experience. These are the words of CS Lewis.

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt

and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape?

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word - Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Do we really understand the love of God for us? This is how we all are. The fact that God loves us will never ever be a tribute **to us**. It will always and forever be **a tribute to God**. Oh how good the Father is that even after the son has squandered the inheritance that God will run to meet him. That is every Christian's story. We would never have chosen God had God not chosen us first.

So that is where our text is couched this morning. Our text is for those who have not been trusting God. It is for those who are recognizing that their way isn't working and the opportunity to call upon God is fading fast. And what we will see is that if God is still working upon us, He has provided a glorious **now**, a glorious **today**, that we can call upon Him for salvation.

Let's look at our text now.

¹ Woe to you who plunder, though you *have not been* plundered; And you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, You will be plundered; When you make an end of dealing treacherously, They will deal treacherously with you.

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⁴ And Your plunder shall be gathered *Like* the gathering of the caterpillar; As the running to and fro of locusts, He shall run upon them.

⁵ The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

⁶ Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, *And* the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD *is* His treasure.

What we see here is what God will do when we trust Him. Remember this is

not a people who run to God first. This is a people who turn to Him when everything else fails.

Verse 1 is talking about the Assyrians. They are the plunderers that God will turn on their heels. In verse 1 we see how it is when **man** plunders. In verse 4 we see how it is **when God plunders**. The Assyrians thought they were entitled to looting. But it is temporary. When God loots, there is no retaliation. It is permanent. It is like stripping a tomb of its loot. There is no one to respond.

Now, what does it look like when God's people get to the end of their rope, when they truly call out to God?

² O LORD, be gracious to us; We have waited for You. Be their arm every morning, Our salvation also in the time of trouble.

Now the people are getting it. They are not saying, don't bother me while I **do the thing I want to do to get what I want to get**. They are not saying, I am comfortable with my life as it is and I really don't want your interference. No. They are saying I am the person here who needs grace. I deserve punishment, but I appeal to you for something better. I trust that you are the kind of God who will give to me better than I deserve.

And my situation? I need salvation. I need rescued. I have made a mess of things. I need you to come in and give me another alternative, a better way. If you don't do this, I will be lost. If you do, I will be saved.

That is what a real heart change looks like. That is what repentance looks like. And it leads to statements like this.

⁵ The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

⁶ Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.

We as humans have a tendency to see everything from our time and space perspective. We see everything in regards to how it can effect our lives right now. Our thinking is often limited to what we can see and touch. But in order to get the help we really need we need to go beyond all this. We need a God who dwells above our reality, who transcends our reality. It is only when we begin to look to a God who dwells on high that we see our God for who He really is. We cannot expect Him to conform to our reality. We must expand our view to take in His reality. He isn't effected by what happens here and

now. He is the changer of what happens in time and eternity. He is never the victim of it.

And it is Him that introduces the changes that are most needed in our lives. It is He who introduces justice and righteousness in time and space. He intrudes with elements of His kingdom injected into our world. He is God.

And what is the effect? Life turns upside down.

Look at what this says about what becomes important when God intrudes into our lives.

Justice and righteousness intrude into our lives. Wisdom and knowledge take the place of foolishness and ignorance. The information and perspective that come from a heavenly point of view intrude into our lives and look what it produces. Stability. This word means steadiness, firmness. What is the opposite? Instability, unpredictability. Remember how that unpredictability was the result of a double minded man.

Do we not all want something we can always depend upon, something that does not change? We want relationships that we know will be there for us. We want our friends to remain loyal to us. We want to know that God is **with us** and **for us** and we can **call out to Him**. No matter how much people want change, they want the things they depend upon the most **to never change**. How do we get such a thing in a life filled with tragedy and change? Wisdom and knowledge. Knowing what God says and applying it is how we get a constancy in this life, a stability in the changing world we live in. Does your life seem out of control? Do you just want stability and order? Receive God's word, God's direction in your life? Even if everything around you is changing, His word will provide stability and the security and comfort we so dearly need.

And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.

What this is talking about is an orientation to a life lived to please God. It receives the guidance from God. It has a proper respect and regard of God. In fact it prioritizes the proper respect of God to the highest priority. It is placed as **a treasure**, a thing of **greatest value**. And it receives the strength that only comes from God, the strength that saves us from those things that appear to be threatening us.

Verses 1-7 present God as the one who ultimately rules. He is more threatening than the ones that threaten us. He is more dangerous than the ones who threaten danger to us. He is more devastating than the ones who

promise to devastate us. It is only God that we should fear. It is only God who is in control. It really doesn't matter what it looks like. If we are on God's side, there is no enemy that can prevail.

7 Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside, The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

8 The highways lie waste, The traveling man ceases. He has broken the covenant, He has despised the cities, He regards no man.

9 The earth mourns *and* languishes, Lebanon is shamed *and* shriveled; Sharon is like a wilderness, And Bashan and Carmel shake off *their* fruits.

Mr Orland says Self salvation makes a lot of sense... until you try it. These are the results. When a people live without God and trust themselves for the answers, this is always the long term result.

He also says no one anywhere, even under ideal conditions has ever figured out how to live well without God. Is that ever been more proven than what we see today. Really, what human condition is there that is not getting worse? Oh maybe crime and unemployment can fluctuate up and down, but look at people's lives. Look at the increase in mass shootings in public places, even ones not related to terrorism. There were 355 in 2017 in the US.

Look at the rate of suicides. In America in 2016 Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the US. There were 44,965 of them, most of them were white middle aged men. This statistic has continued to climb in the last 10 years.

Why?

Frankly, human beings do not know how to live. Apart from God we cannot answer the greatest questions in life. We can't answer why do I exist. We don't know how we are supposed to live. We don't know what our ultimate purpose is. And we don't know what our destination is. We have lost all the things we need to keep our lives in perspective. It is no wonder that everything languishes, just like our text says.

And when does that end? Well, it can be NOW.

10 "Now I will rise," says the LORD; "Now I will be exalted, Now I will lift Myself up.

The **now** of change happens when we come to the end of ourselves. When we give up on our ways and trust God, we get God's "Now".

Do you want God to move in your life? Come to Him completely compliant to His hand and His word and His will. Come expecting His guidance and His provision and His grace to meet your challenges. You will experience the Now

of God's goodness and power. You will experience the now of faith in the Christian life.

God is always willing to move on the behalf of His children. But He waits for His children to be ready to want it, to appreciate it, to receive it. Now is always the time for us to call upon God. Now is always the time for us to look to Him for our provision. God says this.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV)

2 Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

We don't have enough time this morning, but the study of the word **Now** in scripture is extremely encouraging. **Now** is the time of opportunity with our God. **Now** is the time to act. **Now** is the time to trust. **Now** is the time to change. **Now** is the right time for obedience and faith. And **Now** is when God will act to meet our needs.

Now is the time you have. **Now** is when you should act. **Now** is the time for a change. What will we do **now**?

Remember the story of Pharaoh and the 10 plagues?

Exodus 8:9-11 (NKJV)

9 And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only."

In other words Moses is asking Pharaoh, when do you want God to move on your behalf to deliver you from what troubles you. And look what Pharaoh says.

10 So he said, "Tomorrow." And Mose said, "Let it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.

11 And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only."

So Pharaoh is essentially saying, yeah, we would like to deal with the frogs for just one more night. Is that stupid or what? Who would possibly want the misery for one more night? But that is us. We are just like the Pharaoh. We don't want to accept the terms of God's deliverance right away. We want to see how it plays out first. There are so many promises of what God will do for His children **today**. But we choose to delay that blessing by not thinking about it, by running from it, by clinging to our own plans, by clinging to our own solutions. We as humans find it very hard to truly submit to the Lordship of Christ in every area of our lives. Where are we holding back this morning?

Where are we afraid or hesitant to say YES to Christ? Is it in our money, our time, our employment, our way of raising kids, our ways of handling marriage, our sexuality, our entertainment, our escapes, or whatever other thing we struggle with?

Do we really need to first try calling on Egypt and then squandering all of God's resources before we will just call out to God and say "Yes Lord, I will submit to your wonderful Lordship and receive the blessings you have for me from your hand and your hand alone?"