

NC Synod Isaiah Bible Study

Week 7: 3rd Isaiah, Chs 56-66

Admonitions to Judah, having returned home

56:1-8, 58:4b-9, 60:1-7, 61:1-8

(Tues, Mar 23, Richard Rohr's Ctr for Action & Contemplation devotion)

The prophets are people who are imbued with God's love for creation and consequent passion for justice. The encounter with this love and concern brings forth from the prophet the courage to face what others turn away from—the unsustainability of a society that oppresses the poor. At the same time, the soaring possibilities present in God's loving attention to the world fires the prophet with the imaginative power to present the people with an alternative, life-giving future. Engagement with divine love, courage to condemn oppression, and imagination to envision an alternative future are three qualities that define the prophetic experience.

Isaiah 56–66 is generally identified as the work of anonymous prophets, known collectively as Third or Trito-Isaiah, from the early Persian period of Judean restoration (c. 520–400 BCE).

Ch. 56 Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.

2 Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil.

3 Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree."

4 For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,

5 I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

8 Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

Ch 58: 4 Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

5 Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble
oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the
Lord?

6 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?

7 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?

8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

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

(OT Text for Festival of the Epiphany)

60 Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

2 For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;

but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

3 Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

4 Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their
nurses' arms.

5 Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be
brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you,
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;
they shall be acceptable on my altar,
and I will glorify my glorious house.

61 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;
6 but you shall be called priests of the Lord,
you shall be named ministers of our God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.

7 Because their shame was double,
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,
therefore they shall possess a double portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

8 For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Luke 4:16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "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, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."



Book of Isaiah – longest prophetic book; not all of it goes back to 8th-century prophet Isaiah; 3 mains sections

- (1) ch. 1-39 – Isaiah of Jerusalem – pre-Exilic (742-01)
- (2) ch. 40-55 – Deutero-Isaiah – Exile (587-39)
- (3) ch. 56-66 – Trito-Isaiah – post-Exilic (539-)

Mishpat is understood as vindication of the oppressed, requital, vengeance, or the retributive justice of God. Though it can involve punishment, it means most profoundly, "everyone has what she or he needs." Like prophets who announce it, mishpat afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted.