

“I’m a nobody. I’m headed for glory. You’re invited to join me.” That statement is the testimony of the church. It’s also the outline of today’s passage.

1. We’re nobodies. Isaiah highlights the lowly status of his hearers in three ways. **First, in Israel 54:1, Israel is depicted as a barren woman.** In Isaiah’s day, barrenness was a status of weakness and shame. Spiritually, it was seen as a sign of disfavor in God’s eyes. Socially, it meant a woman had no children to protect and provide for her in old age.

Second, in verses 4-8, Israel is pictured as a divorcée. The picture here is a divorce following unfaithfulness. She acted shamefully. When her husband discovers it, he surges with anger, turns away from her, rejecting and deserting her. Without a husband, she is functionally a widow. That was a shameful position socially; not only was your sin exposed, you were left without a provider.

Third, in verse 11, Jerusalem is pictured as “storm-tossed and not comforted.” When storm-tossed at sea, your vessel is out of control; you’re at the mercy of the storm. That describes a barren or divorced woman in Isaiah’s day. Having children is out of anyone’s control. Caught suddenly in adultery and divorced, the unfaithful bride’s world spins out of control. Neither is comforted.

These pictures describe Israel’s circumstances. Jerusalem is childless, her children carried off into exile. The Lord rejected Israel because she committed adultery with idols. Her once glorious home is now in ruins; she is enslaved in the house of a foreign captor. If Israel were a person in her time, she would be a nobody.

That’s why the previous chapter can’t be separated from these chapters. **Isaiah 53** depicts a Servant who is a nobody in the eyes of the world—**“He didn’t have an impressive form or majesty that we should look at him, no appearance that we should desire him” (53:1).** Jesus was *not* impressive in the eyes of others; he was unattractive and undesirable. People turned away from him.

Jesus became like us. In our fallen state, we are appalling, unimpressive, pitiful, undesirable, unvalued, rejected, shunned, sick, grieved, and suffering. So the Son of God assumed human nature and lived as a nobody from his birth in a stable to his death on a cross. He became like us so that he could live and die for us to save us. **“We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all” (53:4-6).**

The starting point of a relationship with God is admitting you’re a nobody, an unimpressive, guilty sinner with no righteousness of your own. That’s who Jesus came for, and unless you’re willing to admit that you’re a nobody, you can’t know Jesus. But if you accept that your hands are empty, then you’re on your way to a glorious future.

2. We’re headed for glory. The barren woman in verses 1-3 is told to rejoice because her children “will be more than the children of the married woman.” So many children are coming that she should build a bigger tent—**“Enlarge the site of your tent, and let your tent curtains be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your ropes, and drive your pegs deep.”** But even that will not suffice. Soon, her offspring will populate all the nations of the earth. **“For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will dispossess nations and inhabit the desolate cities.”**

That echoes God's covenant with Abraham, to whom God promised a single offspring that would become a great nation—more numerous than the stars in the sky—and bless all the nations of the earth. But when the Lord made that promise, Sarah was well past the age of childbearing. When the Lord appeared at their tent and said that she would have a son, Sarah (inside the tent) overheard and scoffed. But now, she should rejoice and get to work making her tent as big as possible, for soon, her children will multiply until they fill the whole world.

God's covenant with Abraham is fulfilled in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:10-12. "When you make him a guilt offering, he will see his seed... After his anguish, he will see light and be satisfied. . . . Therefore I will give him the many as a portion..." The Suffering Servant will die for his people. After his death, he'll see his "offspring." Jesus— though he fathered no biological children—has offspring because the Lord gives him "the many as a portion." Jesus is the true offspring promised to Abraham, which becomes a great nation that blesses all the nations.

The disgraced and rejected wife in verses 4-10 is now told: "Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame; don't be humiliated, for you will not be disgraced. For you will forget the shame of your youth, and you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood." How can this be?

Isaiah says, "**Indeed, your husband is your Maker—his name is the LORD of Armies—and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of the whole earth.**" Redemption is possible because her husband is the Lord—her Redeemer. He will redeem her out of her shame.

For the LORD has called you, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. "I deserted you for a brief moment, but I will take you back with abundant compassion. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but I will have compassion on you with everlasting love," says the LORD your Redeemer.

That echoes the covenant at Mount Sinai. The Law promised blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience. When Israel was unfaithful, the Lord's anger surged and hid his face from her for a brief moment. We've seen this in Isaiah; Israel would be afflicted, destroyed, and carried off into exile.

But that's not the end of the story. The Lord deserted her briefly, but he will take her back with abundant compassion. He hid his face for a moment, but he will show her eternal love. His anger is brief, but his love is big and forever. But how can that be?

The Sinai Covenant is fulfilled in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

He was taken away because of oppression and judgment, and who considered his fate? For he was cut off from the land of the living; he was struck because of my people's rebellion.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death, because he had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully.

God's people are free from the Law because Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law on our behalf—obeying God always and bearing the curse for sin.

To describe the "abundant compassion" and "everlasting love" in Israel's future, Isaiah's imagery shifts away from the Law. The Law offered no eternal peace because it couldn't put away sin. There must be a new, better covenant. **"For this is like the days of Noah to me: when**

I swore that the water of Noah would never flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.” The Lord made a covenant with Noah, promising never to flood the earth again. That promise was not based on Noah’s righteousness. It was based entirely on grace. That is what the New Covenant would be like. **“Though the mountains move and the hills shake, my love will not be removed from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken,” says your compassionate LORD.”**

This New Covenant cannot be shaken, even if the entire earth falls apart. God’s love will never be removed from his people—and his anger will never return! How can that be? Only through the Suffering Servant. The life and death of Jesus Christ are so extensive and complete that God will never be angry with his people again.

Do you believe that? If you are united with Jesus through faith, God is not mad at you—*ever!* You shouldn’t walk through life feeling that God is looking down on you in disappointment and anger or that every hardship is his rebuke. Believing the Gospel means we walk through every circumstance of life knowing that God is not angry with us because nothing in heaven or on earth can remove us from the love of God that is ours in Jesus!

If God’s anger is removed forever and his love is eternally present, then the “storm-tossed and not comforted” city of Isaiah 54:11-17 must have a glorious future! And it does. **First, the Lord will rebuild her ruins with jewels! “Poor Jerusalem, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I will set your stones in black mortar, and lay your foundations in lapis lazuli. I will make your fortifications out of rubies, your gates out of sparkling stones, and all your walls out of precious stones.”** We find this picture in Revelation 21—the New Jerusalem where Jesus lives and reigns with his people forever.

Second, he will establish her in righteousness. “Then all your children will be taught by the Lord, their prosperity will be great, and you will be established on a foundation of righteousness.” Their prosperity will be great because they will be righteous; every person in the city knows the Lord personally. The Old Covenant included both believers and unbelievers. People were members by birth—but they still needed to be evangelized, brought to know the Lord. Because the Old Covenant always included unregenerate people, it always had reason for curses.

But the New Covenant is not like the covenant made at Sinai. Isaiah writes, **“then all your children will be taught by the Lord.”** You don’t enter the New Covenant by being born. You’re only a covenant child if you’re born again—spiritually new through a personal relationship with the Lord. Every New Covenant member knows the Lord because the Jesus removes their sins and establishes their righteousness. Therefore, the city can never be torn down; it can only prosper. So, the Lord says:

You will be far from oppression, you will certainly not be afraid; you will be far from terror, it will certainly not come near you. If anyone attacks you, it is not from me; whoever attacks you will fall before you.

Look, I have created the craftsman who blows on the charcoal fire and produces a weapon suitable for its task; and I have created the destroyer to cause havoc.

No weapon formed against you will succeed, and you will refute any accusation raised against you in court.

This is the heritage of the LORD’s servants, and their vindication is from me.”

God's people were oppressed due to their sin. But through the Suffering Servant's work, they will never be oppressed again. The nations successfully assaulted Jerusalem only because the Lord sent them as the rod of his anger. But his anger is removed now, so no weapon formed against them can succeed. Their sin is removed, so no accusation of guilt brought against them can stand.

This is the glorious heritage of the Lord's servants. Notice that language—"the Lord's servants." This redemption is accomplished entirely by one man, "the Lord's Servant" (singular). Now, through his work, they are all "the Lord's servants" (plural), and they share his glorious status and inheritance. **In Jesus, we nobodies have a glorious future—and you're invited to join us.**

3. You're invited to join us. Isaiah 55 opens: **"Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water; and you without silver, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without silver and without cost!"** In Jesus, God's opened the world's biggest party supply store, and everyone's invited to come take whatever they want! But notice who the "everyone" is—it's everyone thirsty and poor. If you're satisfied outside of Jesus, you can't come and drink. If you think that you possess enough wealth to be satisfied, then you can't buy and eat.

This invitation is only for you if you know and admit that you have nothing good apart from God in Christ. But if you're hungry and the poor, you're blessed. You're invited to buy all the food, wine, and milk you want! It's all free because the Suffering Servant purchased it with his blood.

You'd be a fool not to accept this offer. **"Why do you spend silver on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods. Pay attention and come to me; listen, so that you will live."** It's more than satisfaction on the line—it's life. Everything outside of Jesus is death but he is eternal life.

Jesus offers eternal life because of God's covenant with David. "I will make a permanent covenant with you on the basis of the faithful kindnesses [given to] David." The Lord promised David a son who would reign forever, whose kingdom would never end. And if David's son rules the nation promised to Abraham, then he must be a blessing to people from every nation. And so: **"Since I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples, so you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you. For the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel, has glorified you."** The eternal king is for all the peoples of the earth. They will come running to its beauty.

Who is this Eternal King? It's the Suffering Servant of **Isaiah 53**, which tells us that after he's died, he'll live again—he will see his offspring, and the Lord will prolong his days. **"After his anguish, he will see light and be satisfied."** That is Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins and raised from the dead.

I hope you've noticed a pattern here. Isaiah's now referenced God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Those covenants are the backbone of the Old Testament storyline. They all find their fulfillment in the Suffering Servant. The end of the story is the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the Lord we must seek.

He calls us to seek him today! **“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call to him while he is near. Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, so he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will freely forgive.”** We seek him by leaving our sins and coming to Jesus to receive life—God’s compassion and free forgiveness.

This offer may sound too good to be true! But this is not the word of finite, sinful human beings who exaggerate and lie. This is *the Lord’s declaration*:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways.

For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.

God makes his word effective, so his promise is trustworthy and the outcome is sure. Every nobody that comes to Jesus in faith, has a glorious future, life in a whole new world:

You will indeed go out with joy and be peacefully guided;

the mountains and the hills will break into singing before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Instead of the thornbush, a cypress will come up,

and instead of the brier, a myrtle will come up;

this will stand as a monument for the Lord,

an everlasting sign that will not be destroyed.

Jesus comes to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. No longer will the earth groan under the curse brought by sin. Instead, creation joins the worship service. No more will thorns infest the ground. A new garden flourishes—an eternal testimony to Jesus and our eternal home.