

The Year That King Uzziah Died

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of pride and the importance of humility and repentance in the face of national decline, highlighting God's mercy and the call to seek His presence.

Duration: 43:17

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8, Isaiah 53:5-6, John 3:16-17, Romans 1:18-32

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story of Isaiah encountering God in the year King Uzziah died, highlighting the importance of humility, recognizing our own uncleanness, and God's willingness to forgive and cleanse. It emphasizes the need for believers to stand boldly in sharing God's mercy and truth, even in the face of rejection and persecution, with the hope that at least one in ten will respond and be transformed by God's grace.

Transcript

Praise God. God bless you, Times Square Church and all of our visitors. Happy New Year to you.

We trust this will be a season where the Lord is going to be glorified through his people. Praise God for that hope that God has given us. I'd like you to turn with me please to Isaiah chapter 6, if you will.

Isaiah chapter 6 and also 2 Chronicles chapter 26. I'd like to share with you a message the Lord has put on my heart in the last season. It's called The Year that King Uzziah Died.

The Year that King Uzziah Died. Father, God Almighty, I thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. I thank you, Lord, that you have put two things in each of our hearts.

Firstly, the sobriety of the hour in which we're living. Secondly, the hope in you that is set before us. God, we thank you that as your people that you will never leave us without strength and you'll never leave your own name without a testimony.

God, we ask you to open a very wide door before us. Give us as your people an opportunity to glorify your name in this hour in which we live. Father, give us strength.

Give us power. Lift us, God, out of weakness and take us out of all captivity. Release us, God, from everything that holds us back from being the people that you've called us to be.

Let this year, this new year, mark something in each of us that we can look back and say, from this day forward, I know that my life will never be the same again. Give us strength that can only come from heaven. God Almighty, unlock the resources of the victory that was won for us on the cross.

Give us, oh God, understanding of your word and a greater measure of the power of your Holy Spirit. Cause our voices to be heard in this time in which we live. Give us eyes to see the greatness of our God.

Give us hearts to believe that no matter how dark they are, there's a light that is brighter than all darkness. Father, we thank you for these things. Come upon me, Holy Spirit.

Overshadow the frailty of this human body. Give me the power to speak this. Give each of us in this sanctuary and those who are listening online the power to hear it.

Father, I thank you for this and I praise you in Jesus' name, amen. Isaiah chapter 6, the year that King Uzziah died, verse 1, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim, each one had six wings.

With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said, woe is me, for I'm undone, because I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it and said, behold, this has touched your lips, your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, here am I, send me.

And he said, go and tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.

Then I said, Lord, how long? And he answered, until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant. The houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate. The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a turban tree or as an oak whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump. Now, Uzziah's death was an ominous warning to the nation, that greatness without godliness opens the gateway to a sorrowful and a tragic finish.

Under King Uzziah, the nation arguably had rose or risen to incredible heights of political, financial, and military power. Though its ultimate decline and ruin was clearly in view. Second Chronicles chapter 26 tells us that Uzziah was 16 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 52 years in Jerusalem.

Now, to put it in perspective for you and I today, it's as if we had one leader since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. 52 years brings us to today from that day. So there was one king over this nation.

And under his leadership, the people greatly prospered. The nation became famous in the earth. Abilities were given that were not given to other nations, so that this particular people at this time rose to fame and prominence throughout the nations.

In chapter 26 of Second Chronicles in verse 5, the scripture says in the latter part of verse 5, as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. And so this was a hallmark of this King Uzziah and this time in which he governed. There was a seeking.

Now, there's no generation that can ever lay claim that the seeking of God is imperfection. There's always an imperfection involved as long as people are involved. But there was a seeking of God.

That means, Lord, we acknowledge you. We acknowledge your word. We acknowledge your ways.

We acknowledge your wisdom. We acknowledge that it's in your hand and through your hand that people are given wisdom. They're given might.

They're given power. And so this recognition of God gave him prosperity and gave the nation at that time unprecedented prosperity for this 52-year period. Verses 6 and 7 of the same chapter tell us that he kept his enemies at bay and prospered even within the borders of the enemies of this particular people at this time.

Verse 8 tells us that his fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he became exceedingly strong. Verses 9 to 13 tell us that he increased in goods and defenses and military might. There seemed to be no end to the blessing that was on these people and on this nation at this time.

Verses 14 and 15 tell us that his military equipment and ability to invent and produce new weapons of war made his land the marvel of the nations. Says he made devices in Jerusalem invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong.

You and I can lay claim to that as a nation. I think in this country, this country is a young nation compared to most on the face of the earth in our time. But it is indisputable that people having come from all over the world to this country were made marvelously strong by the hand of God, marvelously helped, wonderfully, wonderfully gifted a place, a nation that became the envy of the world in many cases.

But verse 16 says when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord is God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. And what this means is he had just known success for so long.

And that's always, always a danger of success and prosperity. You'd known it for so long as a king and the nation had been so prosperous under this leadership and the seeking of God and the blessing of the Lord, that pride got into the heart. And Uzziah going into the temple to offer incense is a type of a society, its leadership becoming its own judge of what is right and what is wrong.

Became his own priest. It was clearly in the law that he was forbidden to do this, but it didn't matter anymore because he had had success for so long. He could not see himself in a clear light.

His heart was lifted up in pride. And you know that pride always comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall in verses 17 to 19 tells us that there were valiant men who went in after him. There were

80 priests of the Lord who were courageous men and they withstood him and said, it's not for you to do, to burn incense to the Lord.

In other words, what you're doing is not right. God has not prescribed it to be done this way. You're taking something that is wrong and you're calling it right.

You're taking something evil and you're trying to call it good. And the tells us that as these men who represented the truth of God withstood this King, this King of pride, this pride that had gotten ahold of not only Uzziah, but most likely many people around him. When they withstood it, the scripture tells us that he became furious against them.

What a difference from 52 years earlier or so when he sought the Lord in humility, most likely in God made him to prosper. And now he's gotten to the place where he can do no wrong. And everything that he thinks is good is declared to be good.

Whether or not it is, even if the word of God clearly declares it to be out of order and evil, he now declares it to be good. And when men of God stood in pulpits, perhaps in our day, like this one and others around the nation to say, this is not right. You have transgressed the word of God and there will be a price to pay for this.

You do not violate the word of God without a consequence. You do not lift yourself up to the point where you become your own God and you start to declare evil to be good and good to be evil. You do not do this thing.

And he became furious. And we're living in a time in our society where there's a fury now mounting against those who speak for God. I've said it in this pulpit, and I'll say it again this morning.

We are somewhere in between persecution and prosecution in the house of God, in this nation in which we're living. Almost unthinkable when I came here 21 or so years ago that we'd ever be at a place like this as a people. But here we are.

Evil has become good. Good is becoming evil. Those who stand for truth, as Isaiah said, have become a prey of the ungodly, something to be hunted, something to be vilified, something to be cast down, something to become angry with, something to call names, to castigate, to call names like bigoted, out of touch, divisive.

He became angry and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. In other words, I will be God. I will decide what is right and what is wrong.

Nobody will tell me. And that's what happens to a people. History repeats itself over and over again.

And while he was angry with the priest, the scripture says leprosy broke out on his forehead. It was a visible sign of the spiritually diseased condition of his mind. The leprosy was just an outward expression of what had long ago started to ferment inside of him.

He had a diseased mind, a nation that thinks that we can transgress the word of God without consequence is living in an illusion and is subject to a diseased mind. Romans chapter one, let me just read it to you. Listen carefully to these words, verses 18 and 19.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Because what may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them. When we begin to suppress the truth as a people, a truth we have known, we've walked in it.

It's in our foundations and we begin to mock it. We begin to suppress it. We begin to vilify it.

No fear of God anymore to curse the name of Christ a half a dozen times, even in a G rated movie or magazines to publish articles calling the Bible a violent book or an illusion and castigating Christ. Verse 21 says, because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were they thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened and professing to be wise. They became fools.

Verse 28 says, and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things, which are not fitting or convenient. It says in the King James Bible, and then there's a list of behaviors, which they started to engage in social behaviors, personal behaviors, moral behaviors, where they began to change everything in society and call that which is clearly evil, good and demand as Uzziah did at the altar with the sensor in his hand, virtually raising his hand to demand that the priests bow to his new viewpoint on what was moral and what was righteous only to find leprosy breaking out on his forehead. And he found himself shamed for the rest of his days.

And he died in a leper colony, the disease of the soul manifest firstly in the minds of the people. And then in their subsequent behaviors, where did we ever get the idea as a nation that we were God, that we could declare what is good and what is evil, that we could transgress our own foundation and not pay a price for it. What foolishness.

Now, what does God do in a situation like this? What does he do? How does God respond in this kind of a season? You know, there are many people are looking at what's happening in this country today. And the question is rightly in your heart, what is God going to do? How are we going to navigate the darkness of the days before us? We see the writing of the wall. The declension of our nation is obvious.

Now we're becoming as we were once the envy of the nations. We're now becoming the mockery of the nations. It's obvious that we're becoming weak, confused, paralyzed, socially, politically, morally.

It's obvious that the hand of God is not for in measure of people the way at once his hand once was. So what does God do? How does he respond? How do you and I fit into this moment in history in which we're now living? Folks, this might be one of the most pivotal moments in the history of this nation, perhaps even in the history of the world. And so the question is, where do I fit? How can my life count for something for God, for his glory, for his truth? But it was in this year, it was in the year that King Uzziah died.

It was in the year when hope seemed to be gone. It was in the year when glory was in the past. It was in the year when military might was failing.

It was in the year when the economy was in tatters. It was in the year when enemies were laughing. It was in the year when greatness and glory seemed to be all something relegated to history.

It was in the year when people were afraid for the future. It was in this year that all former glory seems to have died, that God responds with a final act of mercy to that generation. God responds to the perilous condition of that moment by drawing someone into his presence.

That's what he has always done. That's what he will always do. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on the throne, high, lifted up, and the train of his robes filled the temple.

He draws people into his presence who want to be drawn there. He will not draw, if you don't want to go there, he's not going to take you there. But if you want to be drawn into his presence, he will draw you into his presence.

And he gave him a revelation of the majesty, the power, the holiness, and the glory of the one whose purposes are being fulfilled in the earth. I saw him lifted up. I saw the train of his robe filling the temple, the glory, the majesty of almighty God.

Above it stood seraphim, each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, two his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. In other words, nothing is out of his hand. Nothing has escaped his power.

He is in charge of all things. All things are unfolding just as he has allowed them to unfold. And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

One commentator I read said, at the declaration of the holiness of God, and the fact that the earth was full of his glory, even the foundations upon which this vision of Isaiah being drawn up into the presence of God was shaken. Everything was shaken. At the declaration of who God is in all of his majesty, in all of his might.

Now being drawn into the presence of God, a lot of people think, well, when I get drawn up into the presence of God, there's a lot of fakery going on in our generation, and it will increase. There will be lies, there will be deceptions, there will be all kinds of diversions to keep you and I from what really will bring the power of God into our lives. There'll be signs, there'll be wonders, there'll be illusions, there'll be all kinds of things going on in the name of God.

Jesus himself warned about it. But having this face-to-face encounter with God, the very first thing that Isaiah becomes aware of was his own uncleanness, as well as the uncleanness of the people around him. This was a religious man.

This was a religious nation. Up to this point, he's got some duty, marginal prophesying, I really don't know, but he's got some duty in the temple. But he has never fully seen the holiness of God until this moment.

And when he sees the holiness of God and sees his power and his majesty, he becomes aware immediately of how unclean he really is, of how unclean the people of God really are, about how all of our righteousnesses are filthy rags, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's where Isaiah got these words from that he writes later on in his text. He understood it because he had stood in the presence of God.

He understood there's nothing we can do in ourselves, there's no sacrifice we can make, there's no righteousness we can produce in ourselves that will ever give us the right to stand in the presence of a holy God. But the very moment he acknowledges his uncleanness, pride dies. You see, the nation was faltering because of pride.

And the only thing that can counterbalance it are a people who are not filled with pride, but rather filled with humility. They've humbled themselves in the presence of God because they've been in the presence of God. Once he sees the uncleanness of his own heart, the uncleanness of the people, there's an amazing transaction.

It says, one of the seraphim flew to me having a live coal in his hand, which he'd taken from the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it and said, behold, this has touched your lips, your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged. Not only does he first see his uncleanness and the uncleanness of the people, but he now sees the willingness of God to forgive, the willingness of God to change those who will turn back to him again.

He sees it. He doesn't have to plead for it. He doesn't have to beg for it.

He is in measure like the prodigal son who's just a long way off when the father comes running to him and embraces him and covers him, kisses him, puts his shoes on his feet, a robe on his back and a ring on his hand. He experiences this in the presence of God. All he said is, warns me, I'm undone.

My mouth is an unclean mouth and all of our speech, even in the name of God is unholy. Oh God, I could see him just standing there. I'm finished.

I'm done. But at that moment, mercy touches him and he becomes aware that the heart of God is to forgive. The heart of God is to cleanse.

God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son. The heart of God has not changed from the days of Isaiah. It is in God's heart to forgive this nation.

It is in God's heart to gather a people to himself again. It is in God's heart to use those of us who feel like we are undone. Those of us who are keenly aware of our failings, keenly aware that we don't have the right to even speak the name of Jesus, but yet in the mercy of God, he has touched us and cleansed us and covered us and called us.

It's at this moment, he begins to hear the voice of God speaking with himself freely, not with Isaiah, but with himself. It's at this moment where he recognizes it's in God's heart to forgive. It's in God's heart to forgive folks.

It's in God's heart to forgive every man, every woman, every young person, every child in America. It's in God's heart to forgive. He doesn't want to judge.

In the days of Ezekiel, he said, I sought for a man that I should not have to judge the nation, but I couldn't find one. That's a perplexing thought to my mind in a nation so filled with religious people. What does it mean that God can't find somebody that would stay his hand from judgment? And so Isaiah begins to hear the thoughts of God's own heart, conversing with himself, father, son, and Holy Spirit, whom shall I send and who will go for us? In other words, who will be ambassadors of this mercy? Now God knows Isaiah is listening.

Isaiah has just had a revelation. Isaiah has just seen his unworthiness and the unworthiness of all the people, but he has been touched by mercy. And so God's now saying, who now will go and be an ambassador of this mercy to a people who have stumbled and fallen and failed and think that they can be the judges of their own ways and somehow not pay a price for it.

Who, who will be an ambassador of this mercy? Then I said, here am I, send me. And here's what God says, go tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.

Make the heart of this people dull, their ears heavy, shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and be healed. In other words, your ministry is not going to be easy, Isaiah, but it will make an eternal difference in one of 10 people that you speak to. He said, I said, how long Lord? He said, until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitants, the houses are without man, the land is utterly desolate.

The Lord has removed men far away and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land, but yet a 10th will be in it and will return and be for consuming as a turban tree or as an oak whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the Holy seed shall be at stump. There is a tree, the tree that Isaiah was, God was telling Isaiah about is a tree that even though you cut it down, there's life still in it.

And it from the stump will sprout a new tree. It will come back to life again. And God was basically telling Isaiah, the society has reached a point where the majority are now against the ways of God.

They will not hear you. Though you go out, though you've stood in the presence of God, though you can stand there and say, folks, I've seen him. I've talked with him.

I've seen the seraphim. I've watched them shouting, Holy, Holy, Holy. I've, I've seen the very foundations of heaven shake.

I've stood in the presence of God. I've heard his voice. I've understood his willingness to forgive.

Even with all of these things, the majority are so bent on being their own God. They're so bent on evil. They're so bent on living in darkness.

They're so bent on immorality. They're not going to turn Isaiah, but for your effort, one in 10, we'll hear what you have to say. And even though the nation goes into trial, even though places are forsaken, even though cities are laid waste, even though houses are abandoned, even though there are going to be many places that are people trusting that are going to be forsaken in the days ahead.

Yet there will be one in 10 that will have a life planted there by God within them. And no matter what happens around them, they will live. They will stand.

They will endure. They will be like a tree planted by the rivers of living water. One in 10, the one in 10 will have to go through the same sorrow as everyone else.

They'll have to go through the trials, the difficulties, the forsakings, but there will be a seed of God's life within them that will enable them to live when all around them seems lost. There will be a seed in them. Hallelujah.

And so my question to you now in 2015, is the one in 10 worth it? Is the one in 10 worth suffering the rejection of the nine, the scorning of the nine, the vilification of the nine, the sneering of the nine, the lies of the nine, everything that you and I will have to endure in this generation to stand for God. The question is, is the one worth it? Is the one worth it? That's a question Isaiah had to answer before he came back to the ministry God had entrusted to him. And I can hear the voice of God speaking to my heart, who will go, who will tell the people of this generation about my desire to forgive in spite of their folly, in spite of their fallen

condition.

The heart of God is mercy. If they will just come and stand in my presence, as I've touched you, I will touch them. As I've given you hope, I will give them hope.

As I've planted new life within you, I will plant new life within them. But who will stand and face the fear of rejection and the pride of wanting to be loved by all? You see, to stand as a Christian in this time in which we're living, you're not going to be loved by everybody. You're going to be vilified by many.

You're going to be lied about by some. You're going to be threatened by others, mocked by most. But one in 10, thank God, will believe what you have to say.

One in 10. And it makes it worth it. I was praying about this message the other day and I said, God, if you give us one in 10, that means 30 million people in the United States will turn back to you.

30 million, some of whom already are walking with you, will be strengthened. Some of our backslidden will come home and some who don't know you will find you. But one in 10 is 30 million plus in this country.

Are you willing to believe with me for that? God is sending this congregation out across the nation now to call people back to himself. You and I must be willing. And we can't just do on camera what we're not willing to do privately.

Each of us have got to be willing to stand out in the marketplace and make an open declaration that God is good and his mercy endures forever. God is willing to forgive. God is willing to change.

Our ways are not God's ways. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, but God is good and his mercy endures forever. I have walked with him.

You've got to have that testimony. I've seen him. I have prayed.

I've been in his presence. I've been touched by his Holy spirit. And I can tell you one thing, in spite of my frailties, God is good and his mercy endures forever.

In spite of my struggles, God is good. You and I have to be willing to stand. We're not standing as some arrogant people, just presenting another argument.

We're standing humbly before this generation. Say I'm as frail as you are. I'm as fallen as you are, but I'm telling you, I have an encounter with the living God and I learned something.

God is good and his mercy endures forever. When I acknowledged my sin, he cleansed me from my sin. He covered my sin.

He defeated my enemies. He gave me power to be raised out of the power of sin and death. And he's brought me into the newness of life, a life that cannot be taken from me.

Though we go through fire, though we go through flood, though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Who will go? Who will speak? This is not a time to be silent anymore. This godlessness of our generation is not going to go away on its own.

Light has to counter it. Light has to stand up. We have to become a city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden.

We are the light of this world. We are the salt of the earth. We are the hope of this generation.

Those of us who know Jesus Christ, every language, every culture, every race, every denomination, every church, every believer in Christ, we are the hope for this nation now. There will soon be nowhere else to look and no one else to look to. As everything begins to fall and spiral down in ever increasing measure, the question remains, who will go? Who will stand and face the fear of rejection and the pride of wanting to be loved by everyone? Who will be willing to be identified with Jesus Christ? Who is willing to go and tell people that Jesus died for them, that God loves them, and he alone and no one else holds out the offer of forgiveness and eternal life? And so in 2015, here in New York City, the question remains.

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, who shall I send and who will go for us? Then I said, here am I. Send me. And the beauty of this, if you can fully see it, is Isaiah at this point is still undone. He's weak and he knows it.

He has no right to boast of himself for he's seen what he really is without God. There's only one message in his mouth and in his heart. God is good.

His mercy endures forever. He sent his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Who is willing to take that stand and say, Lord, here am I. Here am I. Send me. Let's stand, please, together. Has the Lord spoken to your heart? I want you to understand something this morning.

Years ago, I considered myself of the weakest of the weak of God's people. I had no real pedigree. I was ashamed of a lot of my behavior before coming to Christ.

I was shy. I was afraid of crowds. I seemed like the least candidate ever to speak for God.

But I got up one day in church and I went forward and I said, if you can use me, I give you what I have. It's not much, but if you can multiply it and use it for your glory, then I invite you to do so. And God takes us in that place of brokenness, that place of humility, that place of undone this, that place of saying, God, I'm nothing.

I can't even. I've studied. I've gone to Bible class.

I've taken all these courses. I can't even bring myself to speak the name Jesus in my workplace. I'm such a coward.

But yet that's where God takes us. And he gives us what we need. He gives us a love that casts out fear, gives us a compassion for the lost, even those that will speak evil of us.

He gives us a compassion for them. Because ultimately we do have the truth. There is no other truth besides Jesus Christ.

And so if in your heart you feel like I once did and you just say, God, I don't know. I don't have much and I can't make any boasts. I am undone.

But here I am, Lord. Send me. If that's you today, would you just slip out of your seat and just come to the front of this auditorium in the annex step between the screens, the same at the North Jersey campus.

And people are at home. Just stand up in your living room, wherever you happen to be. If you're alone in your bedroom, just stand up and let it be a cry of your heart.

Here am I. Oh, God. The balcony, you go to either exit. You can make your way down.

But Lord, here am I. Send me. Don't let people die in their sin when I know the truth. I know where life is.

I know where strength can be found. Please, God, deliver me from cowardice and deliver me from fear. Deliver me, God, and help me to speak your name, Jesus.

Help me, God. Here am I. Let that be the cry of your heart today. Here am I, Lord.

Send me. Hallelujah. I believe that Isaiah, it's my personal belief that he had a God gave him at the throne, the panoramic view of redemption.

That's why in Isaiah 53, he could write about the Messiah. He knew that God was more than one because even when he wrote, he said, who will go for us? It is possible he saw God, the son. But he wrote, he said, he was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. Chastisement of our peace was upon him. And by his stripes or by his wounds were healed.

He had a knowledge, God-given knowledge of mercy. And the mercy was going to come through a redeemer who was going to be beaten, bruised, wounded, and die for our failings, for our struggles, our trials. When God's about to use your life in a deeper way, you will become very aware of your own failures and your own frailty.

And it's only because he wants to deepen you because you will have a compassion for other people. Religious people aren't compassionate. They're very proud of their accomplishments and their holiness, and they become obnoxious.

But people who've been humbled in the sight of God have a natural compassion for people in all forms of behavior out in our society. And they don't speak with arrogance. They speak with tenderness.

They were touched with the tenderness of God, and so tenderness comes from their lips. And people know it. People know it.

I was having lunch with an unsaved man a little while back, and in the middle of our meal, he looked up at me and he said, you really care about me, don't you? I said, yes, I do. He said, why do you care? Why do you care? It was not about theology at that point. It was about the compassion of God in my heart for a man heading into eternity without being saved.

Now, Father, we just lift our hearts before you, God, and all we can say is draw us into your presence. As a congregation, Lord, as a people, we ask in this time of fasting at the end of this month, Lord, that you would draw us and speak to our hearts, Lord, and whatever crooked way needs to be made straight, Lord, help us not to resist you. And grant to our hearts, Lord, that we might be filled with mercy.

The mercy that you had towards us, may we be ambassadors of that mercy to others. Give us courage to speak that is born of love, for your word says that perfect love casts out fear. Give us courage to speak to people because we love them and they will know it.

Even those who are hardened against their own redemption. God Almighty, I thank you for men and women at this altar today and those who have come to the altar in their hearts. I thank you, God, that you won't leave this generation without a witness.

You won't leave this time without a voice. Oh, God, I thank you with all my heart. Our hearts are filled with hope, Lord, for the days ahead.

For even one man, Jonah, went into a wicked city and you turned it and it was spared for a generation. God, we've seen who you are and what you can do and what you're willing to do. You are full of mercy.

Mercy is who you are. And so, God, we thank you for it with all of our hearts today. Baptize us in mercy.

Baptize us in power. God, touch us with the mercy that's in your heart and give us a message, Lord, for this generation. And give us the courage, Lord, to keep going until we find the one of every ten.

And Father, we thank you that we can give them the promise that there will be life and this life will endure. It will not be taken away. Circumstance cannot claim it.

It belongs to God. It comes from God. It goes back to him.

Father, thank you, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus, for touching my brothers and sisters this day. Thank you, God, for taking us right where we're at.

We have no boast. We've got no certificates to lay before you. Just us.

Just as we are. But that's all you've ever needed. It's all you've ever wanted.

A people who understand mercy. Thank you for this, Lord Jesus Christ. We praise you and we bless you in your holy name.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

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