

UNPACKING THE WORD for
July 12, 2020 sermon
“God’s Ways Are Not Our Ways”
Isaiah 55:8-11

The central push in this message was that God’s ways are not our ways. The only way we can understand this truth is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. In the message, I likened this relationship to an anchor. Most of us know the words of the old hymn by Ruth Caye Jones (1902-1972), “In times like these...Be very sure, be VERY [emphasis mine] sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock. This rock is Jesus...He’s the One.” A relationship with Christ automatically gives us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who helps us to read the Bible for truth to live by, not just nice literature. It is only through this that one can REALLY understand that God’s ways and our ways differ.

How do we see this played out? The PANDEMIC is how we see this played out. God allowed the pandemic for any number of reasons. I think one of them was to draw us lovingly back to Himself. Anyway, as far as an example, do you remember at the beginning of this when top scientists were saying masks were unnecessary? As I write, Milwaukee and its suburban governments are trying to wrap heads

around the **NEED** to mask up. It's a tender issue for many because the virus has been so politicized and racialized (my computer doesn't recognize this word LOL).

CONTEXT and SERMON BODY EXCERPT (from my manuscript - this did not make it into the sermon but you may view the message **FREE** on this site)

Words of the Rev. Dr. John Richard Walton, Jr. (Walton, 2020)

“We’re in a time now where people don’t want to protect themselves or anybody else. Some see it as an infringement on their rights to wear masks and social distance. The science is clearer and clearer. Leaders in denial don’t want citizens to get tested. This virus has been denied, politicized, and increasingly racialized, especially after the Floyd, Arbery and Taylor murders. And yet, there is no clear end in sight. We don’t know when church edifices will, in large part, reopen. Schools are polling parents to see if their kids are coming back to school. And the numbers keep rising. And as the numbers continue to rise, and more people get sick and die, some who are angry that it cannot be stopped by their money, position, race, religion, complexion, or creed are either in complete denial, want to politicize it and use it to gain an office seat, or get mad because the pandemic doesn’t care about privilege.

Well, how now shall we live? What shall we do? To Whom shall we go for help in a time like this?

Well, there is a word for us that we can use in these times to keep us grounded in Christ. It is found in the 55th chapter of Isaiah. This is a passage of reconciliation and promise for the future. After the exile, Israel enjoyed some benefits but all will be enjoyed later in the New Jerusalem. As for this present time, this passage helps us to

understand what God is looking for out of His church not only in this pandemic, but period.

Just as God rescued Zion from Babylonian exile as spelled out in the 54th chapter, God will one day rescue to world from the ravages of the Covid-19. Because we have faith in Jesus, we know that He has power over the coronavirus. Now, if I did not know Jesus, I would not be so sure. But because I am sure of what the prophet was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write preceding our focal text, I am entirely comfortable in the truth of what we read in the 55th chapter.

Chapter 56 has strong bearing on our text at this moment in time because its first words in verse one are as follows,

“This is what the Lord says, “Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed” (56:1). In his work on this section of Isaiah, Christopher Sietz says, “There is clearly an air of newness and urgency in this proclamation...We are in a new day. The prophet does not retrieve inflexible teachings from the past and apply them in a situation calling for something new...The opening appeal is sober and direct. Maintain justice and do what is right” (p.486). As we look around, we see cries in the street to do just that from the highest seats in local, state, and national government - and yet, in many ways, we have been disappointed” (Walton, 2020).

CONCLUSION - ACCEPT JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOR
(JOHN 3:16, 17) AND YOU WON'T NEED TO
WORRY IF THIS IS THE END OF THE WORLD,
OR WHAT WILL HAPPEN.

READ PROVERBS 3:5-6

MAY GOD COMFORT, GUIDE AND BLESS US ALL

FAITHFULLY AND LOVINGLY,
REV. DR. JOHN RICHARD WALTON, JR.

(WALTON, 2020)