



Sermon Discussion Questions
October 8, 2023,
The Gospel According to Isaiah
THE LORD IS COMPASSIONATE TOWARD US
Isaiah 54:1-8

1. Opening Discussion Questions

- a. If you have ever listened to music on the radio, you will probably agree that *love* is the most common subject for songwriters. “*You’ve Lost that Lovin’ Feelin’*”, “*This Guy’s in Love with You*”, “*I Just Called to Say I Love You*”, “*Can’t Help Falling in Love*”, “*I Will Always Love You*”, and “*Love Story*” are just a few of the hundreds. What is your favorite song about love? When did you first hear it and what was going on in your life at the time?
- b. Have you ever known a couple that struggled with infertility? To what lengths did they go in their attempts to have a child? How did it affect their relationship with each other and relationships with others?

2. Sermon Outline/Key Points

- a. Praise God When You Don’t Feel Like It (Isaiah 54:1-6)
 - i. God invites His people to praise Him in difficult times.
 - ii. It's difficult to worship and praise when life is painful, but we must.
- b. Understand God's Great Compassion for You and Us (Isaiah 54:7-8)
 - i. God truly understands and is genuinely compassionate.
 - ii. God's steadfast, everlasting love is rooted in deep compassion for us.
- c. Prepare and Act in Expectation of God's Faithfulness (Isaiah 54:2-3)
 - i. We're called to act in faith before we have the evidence of our eyes.
 - ii. Though we live in challenging times, we must act boldly in faith, expecting God's will to be done.

3. Study/Discussion Points:

- a. *Sunday Afternoon* – As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to prayerfully ponder these questions:
 - i. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn or of what forgotten truth were you reminded?
 - iii. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
 - iv. What is one specific thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. Monday – Isaiah 54:1

- i. In the ancient Middle East being barren was a condition that brought great shame on a woman, yet God uses these situations to bring honor and glory to His name and carry out His plan for history. What lessons can we learn from:
 1. Sarah: Genesis 11:30, 16:1-2, 18:11-15
 2. Rebekah: Genesis 25:21-21
 3. Rachel: Genesis 29:31, 30:1-5, 30:22-24
 4. Manoah's wife (Samson's mother): Judges 13
 5. Hannah: 1 Samuel 1:1-20
 6. Elizabeth: Luke 1: 7, 36-37 and 57-58
- ii. Given these many cases (excluding Elizabeth who came later) why would comparing the Jewish exiles with a barren woman have been a particularly powerful way to begin this section of Isaiah which provides assurance of God's promise to restore His people?

c. Tuesday – Isaiah 54:2-3

- i. In Isaiah's day, and even among nomadic tribes today, as your extended family grew you would sew more material to your tent (think of building an addition on your home) – and of course that necessitated stronger poles & pegs and longer ropes.
 1. While God is speaking metaphorically here, when in the process of growth did God expect the exiles to enlarge their tents?
 2. What important spiritual characteristic is shown by enlarging your tent before any children are born? Which of the barren women considered above did not demonstrate this characteristic?
 3. Jesus told a famous parable about a man that tore down his barns and built bigger ones in Luke 12:16-21. What is fundamentally different between the parable and this command to enlarge tents?
- ii. Compare verse 3 with Genesis 22:17-18 and 28:14. How do we as Christians benefit from these promises?

d. Wednesday – Isaiah 54:4

- i. Once again, we are told to "Fear not". This is the 9th time "Fear not" has appeared since we started this series in chapter 40. Read the earlier uses at Isaiah 41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8; and 51:7.
 1. What do you think it meant to the Jew that would read this scroll to hear God say "Fear Not" so often?
 2. What reason does God provide for not being afraid?
 3. Anthropologists classify cultures as being based on either guilt, shame, or fear. What does this verse suggest was the nature of the Jewish culture? How would such a culture be more inclined to identify with the metaphors of a barren woman or a widow?
- ii. In verse 4 the example is changed from a barren woman to a widow. Widows, especially those of childbearing age, were often looked on with disgrace. God however placed them in a special protected class. Read

Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17; 24:20–21; 26:12–13; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; and Zechariah 7:10.

1. A picture of what it is like to be a widow in such a society is seen in the story of Ruth, especially chapter 1. Consider verses 19-21.
2. Another can be seen in 1 Kings 17:7-12 when Elijah is sent to the widow at Zarephath.

e. Thursday – Isaiah 54:5

- i. Verse 5 places the focus solely on God and provides six names and/or roles for Him. What are they and what do they mean to you?
- ii. He is shown first as Israel’s “Maker”. Read Job 4:17, Psalm 95:6 & 149:2, Isaiah 17:7 & 45:11, and Hosea 8:14.
 1. For the nation of Israel how do you think “Maker” differs from “Creator”?
 2. Consider Ephesians 2:4-5. How is He our “Maker”?
- iii. The “Maker” is also the “husband” – a deliberately chosen role that is expected to last for perpetuity. It will. God will not break His covenant even when the wife is unfaithful. Consider Jeremiah 3:14 & 31:32; Hosea 2:7 & 16.
 1. What does it mean to you that God promises to continue to be the “husband” to Israel despite her transgressions?
 2. In what way are we as Christians tied into the fact that God is a husband? See Ephesians 5:32, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7 and 21:9.
- iv. God is Israel’s “Redeemer” from the captivity they were experiencing. Christ is “Redeemer” from the captivity to sin we all experience. Read and meditate on Romans 3:23-24, Galatians 3:10-14, Ephesians 1:3-10, and 1 Peter 1:18-21.

f. Friday – Isaiah 54:6

- i. Verse 6 is difficult because in most English translations – reinforced by our cultural experiences – it appears to place the blame for the apparent failure of the marriage on the husband. While it is true that God sent Israel into exile because of her sin, He didn’t abandon her. Instead, He gave her the opportunity to experience what it was like to live in a land where He was not worshipped – but idols were – as a punishment.
 1. A good illustration of this at the human level is provided in the account of Hosea. Read Hosea 1:2-3 and 2:14-3:3.
 2. What parallels do you see to the way Hosea dealt with his wife and the way God dealt with Israel?
- ii. As born-again believers we have been brought back into a proper relationship with God. Collectively we are now part of His Bride, the Church, and individually we are his sons and daughters (Romans 8:15-17).
 1. How does this new status mirror Gomer’s in Hosea 3:1-3? The Jewish exiles in Isaiah 54:6?

2. How do you think the truth provided in Ephesians 1:4-5 and Romans 8:29-30 shows us to be in a situation like the Jewish exiles? Is there any question that God will redeem us?

g. *Saturday – Isaiah 54:7-8*

- i. The final two verses of the focal passage supply great encouragement but also show us the severity of the original situation.
 1. Based on these two verses how would you describe the seriousness of God’s reaction to Israel’s sin?
 2. What is your reaction to hearing that our loving God had a “surge of anger”?
 3. Modern Protestant theologians often downplay or dismiss God’s anger and wrath. How would you feel about such a position after reading these passages: Numbers 16:46, 2 Kings 22:13, 2 Chronicles 36:16, Psalm 38:1, Jeremiah 50:13, John 3:36, Romans 1:18, and Colossians 3:6
- ii. How are you encouraged when you compare the period of time God was angry with the length of time, He shows compassion and kindness?

4. Application: On May 30, 1792, a young pastor named William Carey preached a sermon based on Isaiah 54:2-3. That sermon is credited with being instrumental in the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society; William Carey became known as the “Father of Modern Missions”. His sermon highlighted two phrases that have motivated many ever since: “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” Spend time in prayer contemplating those phrases. What great things are you expecting from God in your life? In the life of LRBC? What great things will you attempt for God? When will you start?

5. Prayer Points:

- a. **A**doration – 1 Peter 4:16
- b. **C**onfession – James 5:16
- c. **T**hanksgiving – Philippians 4:6
- d. **S**upplications – James 4:2-3
 - i. That God will provide opportunities for each of us to attempt something great for Him this week.
 - ii. That those God calls will sign up for one of the “Grow Deeper” Thrive Groups
 - iii. For the new Vines and Branches cohort.
 - iv. For the more than 60 kids that are now enrolled in the Wednesday evening Awana program and especially that additional volunteers will accept God’s call to serve in this ministry.
 - v. For the entire staff of Lake Ridge Baptist Church as they adjust to new roles and responsibilities