

SOME WILL NOT LISTEN

INTRODUCTION

READ Isaiah 6:8

We often hear these verses in sermons about volunteering in the church or doing outreach, or at the end of the missionaries presentation about overseas missions.

This is totally appropriate for sure, but quite often we don't actually read the following verses.

Last week's sermon was covering the preceding verses where Isaiah saw the Lord, was purified, and then commissioned to speak to the people as a mouthpiece for God. What we saw there is that the same has happened to you and I.

It's all very exciting stuff.

But being commissioned by God doesn't always mean that it's going to go really well, or that anyone will listen.

BLIND, DEAF, AND HARDENED

READ Isaiah 6:9-10

Isaiah says, "Here I am, send me!" And his first prophecy out of the starting gate is, "You are not going to listen to a word I say."

This text is quoted by Jesus in the book of Matthew so let's head over there. Jesus is going to tell us what's going on here.

READ MATTHEW 13 – THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

There is a lot to draw from this short parable, but the big idea here is that the sower's job is to sow seed everywhere. But even if the sower is faithful to sow everywhere, and even if the seed is good, the soil must also be good.

Sometimes, the soil is rotten or hard and the seed will not grow there until the soil better prepared.

VERSE 10-17

The disciples are frustrated and ask Jesus why He tells these obscure stories instead of being plain spoken about things.

Jesus responds by quoting Isaiah's prophecy!

Jesus' parables are basically a kind of spiritual "soil test". He is not just trying to get out information, He is also exposing the condition of the soil – He is revealing the hardness of their hearts.

So, when Isaiah prophesies that his message is not going to be received well due to the hardness of their hearts he is not just talking about God's people then at that time. He is talking about mankind's response to the gospel of Jesus, and by extension he is talking about us as the mouthpiece of Jesus.

It will not always go well for us in our mission. We must have a motivation that is bigger than having our message received, or even understood at all. Being misunderstood should be expected!

HOW LONG, O LORD?

READ Isaiah 6:11a

Isaiah is understandably frustrated at this news. He asks a good question of God:

"HOW LONG, O LORD?"

He recognizes that the hearts of God's people cannot remain hard forever. It is not a matter of if, but it is a matter of WHEN. He doesn't ask, "Will they ever hear?" He asks how long it will take.

God's power is not limited by their spiritual deafness. He's just really patient. He is so patient, that His patience can look like a limitation. To someone that doesn't really know God, it might look like His hands are tied by the hardness of His people's hearts. This isn't so!

God has chosen to do things the hard way, with a long view. He literally has all the time in the world to soften their hearts.

GOD'S ANSWER

READ Isaiah 6:11b-12

God says that it is going to take a lot of judgment to bring them to repentance. Everything is going to have to fall apart, every last vestige of comfort and idolatry will have to be torn down. And when there is nothing left, then they will turn to Him.

Haven't we all been here before? Haven't we been here more than once?

You run your own way for a long time, letting your heart get hard and spiritual ears dulled. Then God starts to discipline you by letting one thing fall apart after another until nothing comforts you any more. It's at that point that you stop, turn (repent), and run back home to Jesus like the Prodigal Son.

This is not only true for individuals, it is also true for nations.

THE STUMP REMAINS

READ Isaiah 6:13

Some translations like the NIV say “But” instead of “like” which helps with the meaning but kind of messes up the poetry.

We will see in chapter 10 and 11 of Isaiah that this stump that miraculously survives God judgment is in fact referring to Jesus. It is the root, or the stump, of Jesse which Paul refers to in Romans 15.

For now, just know this: No matter how scorched the earth may be under God’s hand of discipline, not matter how hot the fire gets, no matter how hard our hearts may be, no matter how long it takes for me and you and them to turn and repent, there is One who has stood under the full wrath of God for our sin. He took the flames that burn for us on Himself and from the ashes of the death we deserve He rises. And from Him grows and new people, the people of God that He calls out from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

Our hope is not even in our ability to soften our hearts and hear the Lord. Our hope is in Christ alone who will be faithful to turn not only us to Himself, but our nation as well.

CLOSING

So don’t be discouraged either with your own cold heart and dull senses or with the hard, packed soil that you see around you.

Keep sowing seed. God has promised to break up the earth and prepare the soil. Even though it will take a lot of scorched earth to get there, a Stump will remain and His name is Jesus.